INDIA'S No.1 TRAVEL MAGAZINE

Outlook traveller

SEPTEMBER 2020 • ₹150

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THE LONG JOURNEY

JUST A LITTLE FURTHER TO TAKTSANG

OUR MAN IN EUROPE, NITIN CHAUDHARY

UNDHIYU RECIPE FROM GUJARAT

ROADTRIP ACROSS THE DIFFERENT STATES

NEW FACES IN OLD PLACES: HAMPI

EMBRACE NIRVANA AT GANPATIPULE

YOGA THROUGH THE AGES

AROUND THE BLOCK
HAZRATGANJ

MEET THE GM
SUMAN NANAIAH

TIME TRAVELLER
THE MAHARAJA OF AIR INDIA

BOOK REVIEW
EVERY CREATURE HAS A STORY

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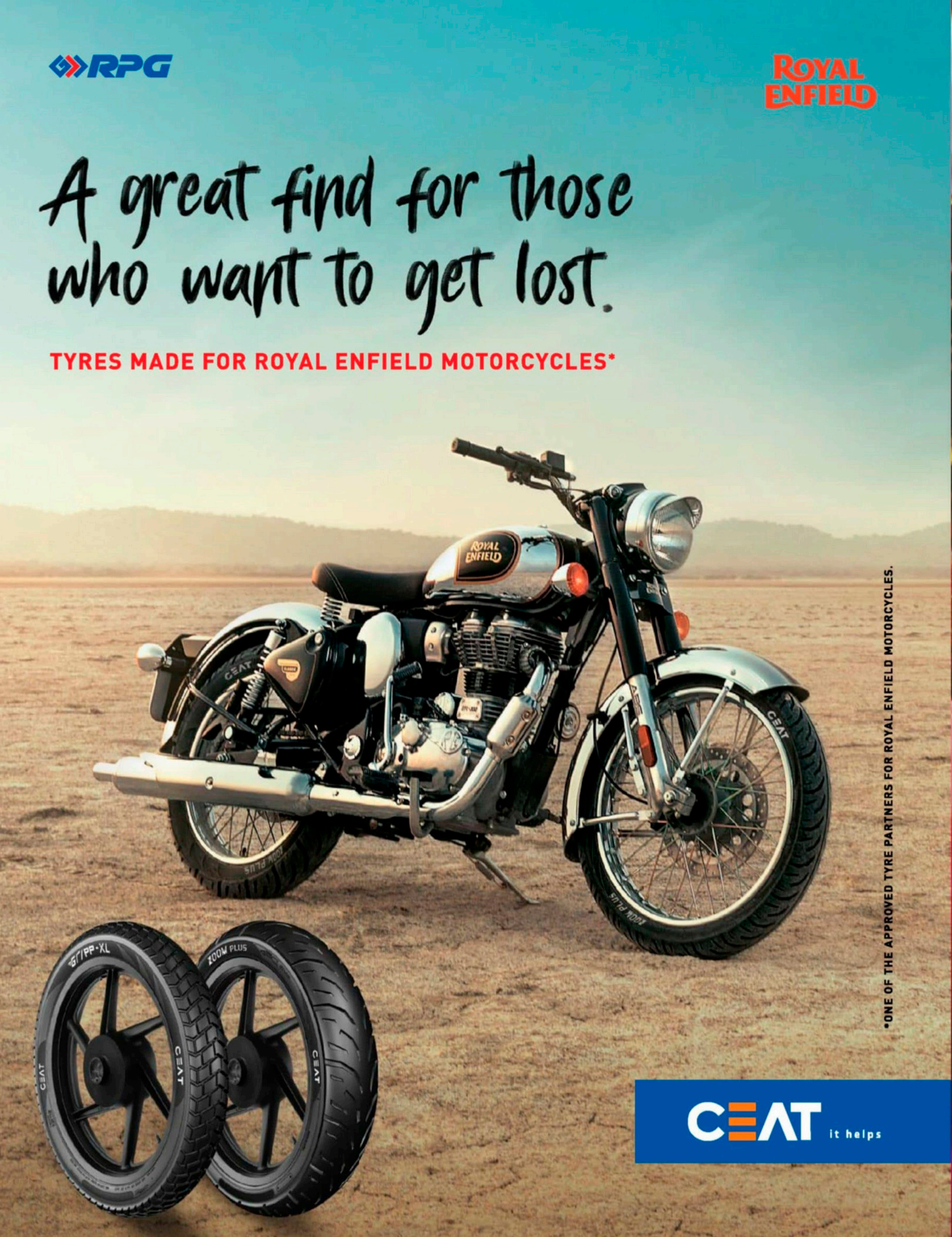
IT'S NOT WHERE — IT'S HOW


RPG
ROYAL ENFIELD
A great find for those who want to get lost.
TYRES MADE FOR ROYAL ENFIELD MOTORCYCLES*
*ONE OF THE APPROVED TYRE PARTNERS FOR ROYAL ENFIELD MOTORCYCLES.
GRIPP-XL
ZOOM PLUS
CEAT
CEAT it helps

september

Roadtrip Special

VOLUME 20
ISSUE 6

"Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing at all."
– Helen Keller

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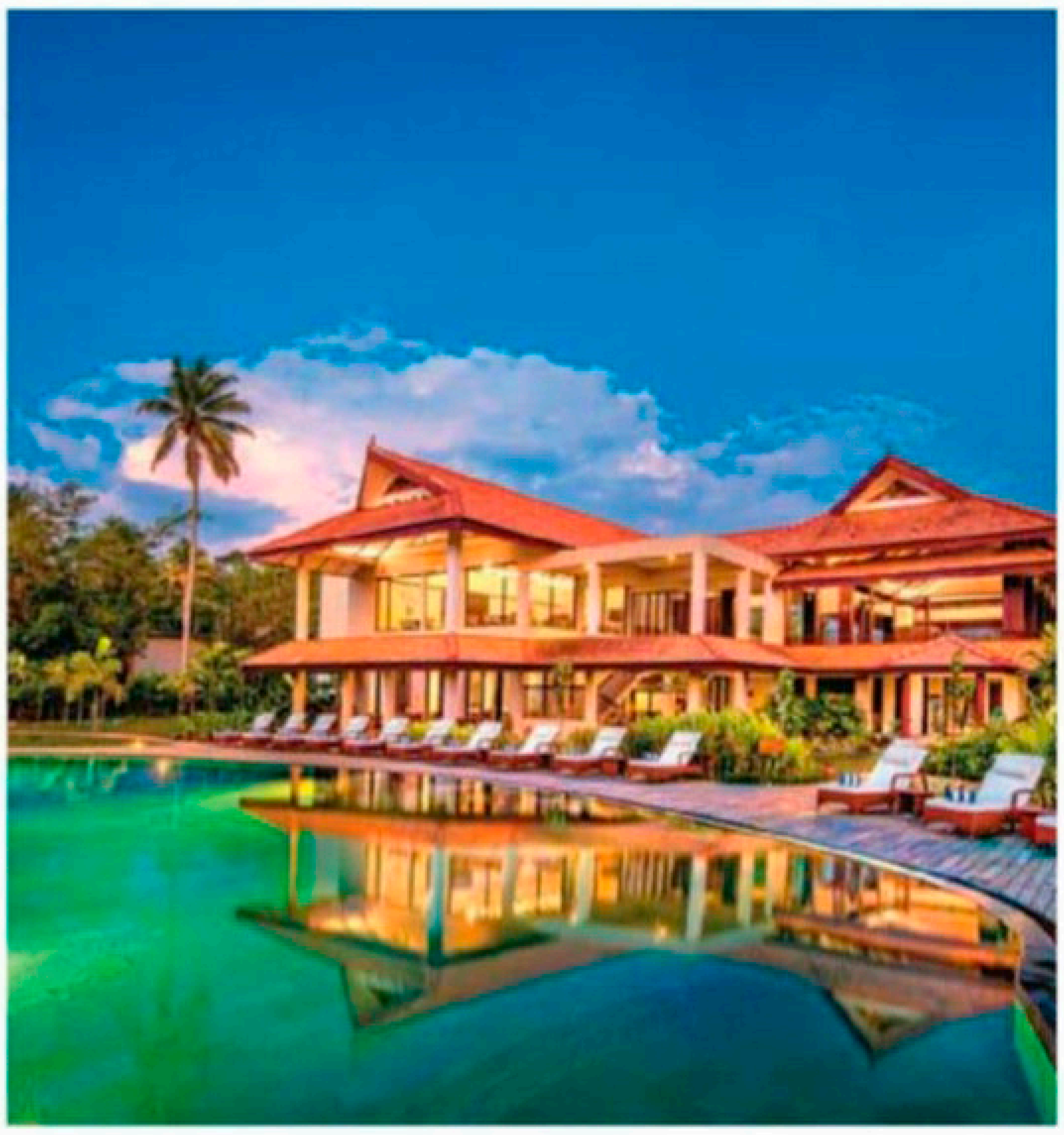
Cover photograph: SHUTTERSTOCK

september



↑ Niraamaya Retreats, Kumarakom **81**

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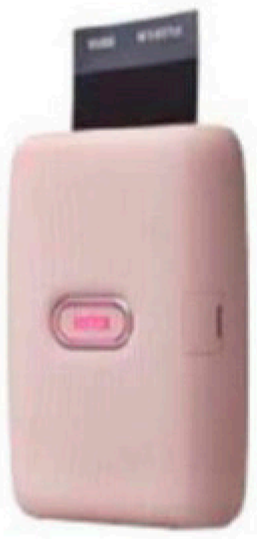

↑ *The mini printer for your smartphone, Fujifilm's Instax Mini Link comes in Dusty Pink, Ash White and Denim Blue* ***88***

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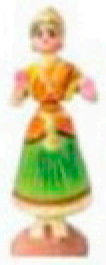

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Long-haul holidays

Who would have thought it, but it looks like proper holidays are making a slow but steady comeback. Sooner than expected. Trends indicate that more and more families are hitting the road, heading out to a favourite cottage in the hills or exploring an entire state on a single trip, with a marked preference for scenic settings which offer easy seclusion and social distancing. And it's likely to stay this way for a while.

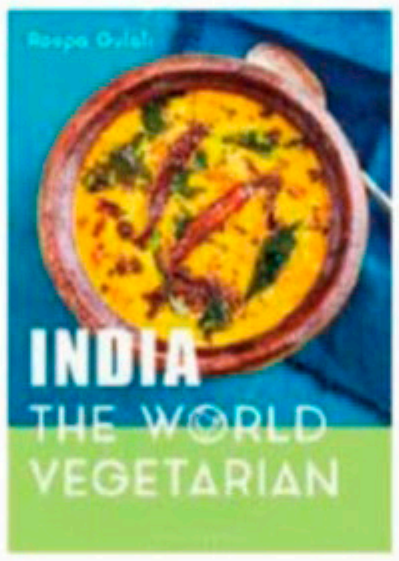
Work From Home has basically become Work From Anywhere. And the kids can log into their online classes from anywhere too. Our cover story this issue explores the phenomenon and we've lined up some nice suggestions from across the country for you. Reminds me of the sort of holidays at least we used to take in my childhood, long group tours or vacations to the home town (*nani ke ghar*) which could last an entire summer.

All you foreign junkies who like to sail (or fly) across the seven seas, let's take this as an opportunity to explore India properly. There's a breathtaking variety of destinations and experiences here. And they need our support right now. In fact, the next wave of tourism is likely to be regenerative, not just sustainable. In other words, you leave a destination in better shape than you found it.

Foreign junkies who like to fly across the seven seas, take this as an opportunity to explore India properly

My photograph accompanying this issue's letter is from a trip to Ranthambhore last winter. There was a delicious nip in the air, and the sun shone bright in a way it only does on a cold winter's day. There was music in the air (this was at the Ranthambhore Music Festival). How I miss those trips now, especially large gatherings of people, pressed into close proximity. Wonder when we can have our festivals back. And crowded streets with buskers. And food shack queues. And hugs. And handshakes. Fingers crossed...

Amit Dixit @omitdixit



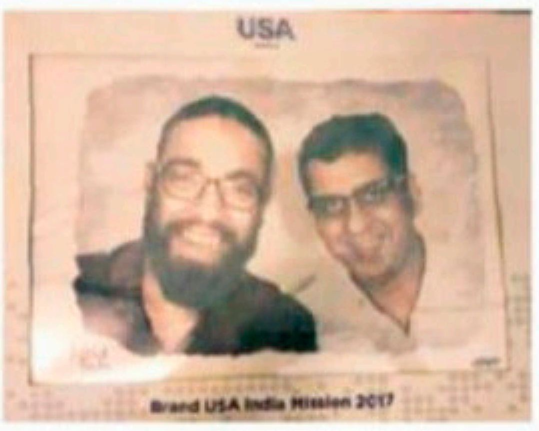
CROSSED OFF MY READING LIST

India: The World Vegetarian
Roopa Gulati

One doesn't really read a cookbook from cover to cover, but I know I'll be dipping into this one a lot.

UP NEXT
Meditations
Marcus Aurelius

3 things I did this month



↓ Had some non-alcoholic beer (quite nice)

↑ Went through my stuff and found this #throwback photo with someone famous

0,0
Hoegaarden
Blanche
NON-ALCOHOLIC

← Burnt some cookies (still pretty, no?)

Something I ate

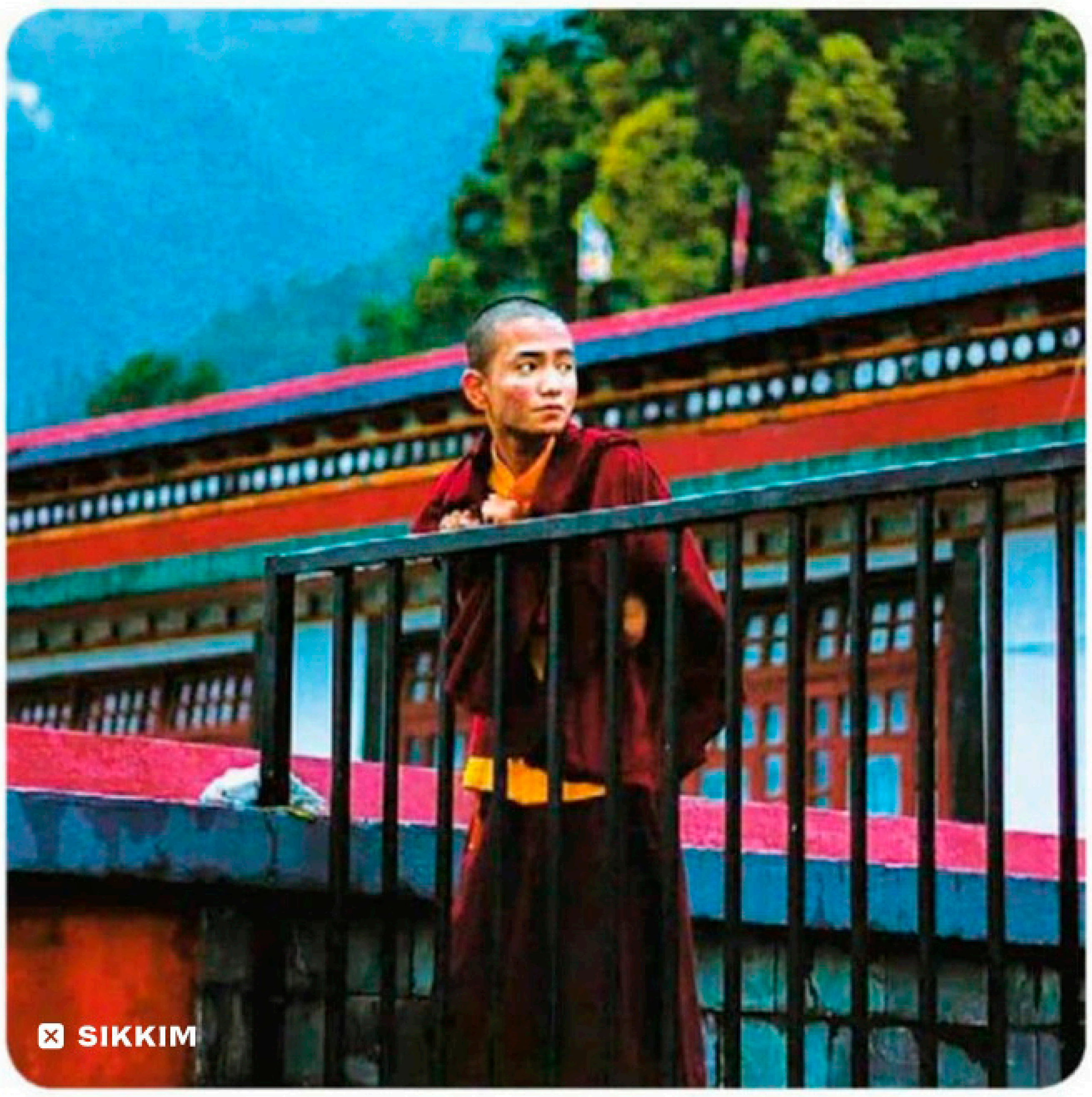
Turkey! Courtesy Chef Sabyasachi Gorai who has been rustling up this and other American birds at his Deli.

The Chatter

FACEBOOK / INSTAGRAM / YOUTUBE **@outlooktraveller**
TWITTER **@oltraveller**

#OTHallOfFrame

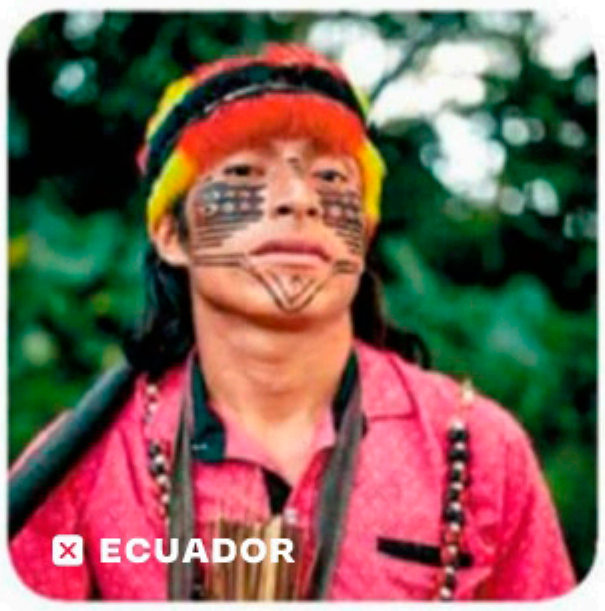
We scoured through our feed, brimming with all kinds of gems, to bring you the rarest of our finds



@_ayeli.m_ Gazing at the golden spotlight as a single ray of sun emerges from behind the clouds

@adaay.10 The man who knows Jaipur in and out

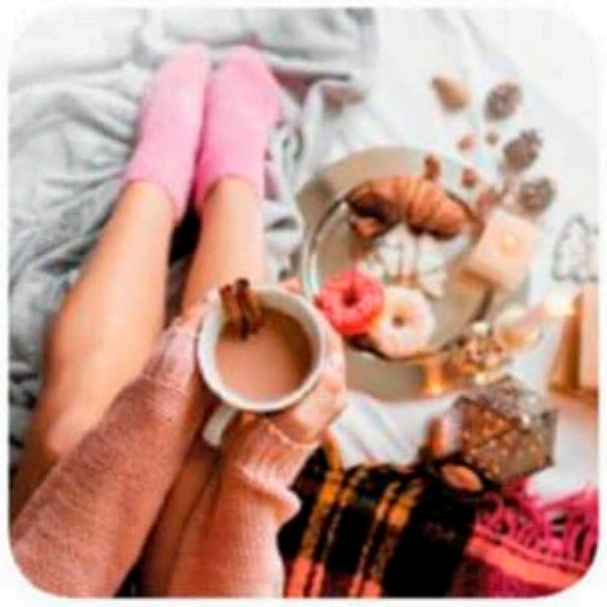
> **"Exuberant, vivid and bewitching. The cultural heritage here will leave you with a lifelong experience of pure divinity."**
> **@su.nita8926**



@dan_lior Tribal tales from the Amazon rainforest

ON THE CHANNEL

VIDEO Theyyam of Kolathunadu | Kerala



POLL TO PICTURE

So many travellers, so many travel styles. Here's what you picked!

SOUL FOOD	FINE DINING
ADVENTURE	ESCAPE
DELAYS	STOPOVER
NECK REST	HEADPHONES
RAINFALL	SNOWFALL

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Reminiscing the good ol' days

I subscribed to *OT* for the first time when I was in school. But back then I couldn't travel as much. So, I travelled through your magazine. Over the years many other travel magazines came but I eventually stopped reading. Recently, I rediscovered all these magazines on the Jio App but the one I specifically looked for was *OT*. The articles are still as good. The layout is still as amazing. Till now, I've just read your editorial section, but I already love it. Thank you for keeping the magazine going.

MEGHNA CHOWDHARY, VADODARA

We love mail! Write in to letters@outlooktraveller.com

Around The World on Celluloid

All set for your next virual escape from the comfort of your armchair?

Baraka
Ron Fricke • A documentary filmed over 5 years in 25 odd countries; it explores language, nationality, religion and politics

Tracks
John Curran• An adaptation of the real life memoir of Robyn Davidson, it chronicles the nine-month-long journey across the deserts of Australia

The Darjeeling Limited
Wes Anderson• A dramedy involving family bonds, the movie takes you on a trip across India aboard the 'Darjeeling Limited'

Copenhagen
Mark Raso • An indie coming of age adventure, Copenhagen recounts the protagonist's journey as he backpacks across Europe

If you're unsure which one to pick, fret not! We've got you covered. For more film recommendations head to our website.

Exploring Hidden Treasures

@Soumitra2015 The travelogue on Puducherry authored by Ms Sohini Basu was a superb piece. Savoured every word of it thoroughly.

@MahajanPaul Unseen and beautiful paradises are finally being discovered. One only needs an eye to appreciate it.

Outlook group

BEST COVID-READY INNOVATION

BEST STRONGER TOGETHER EFFORT

INDIAN RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AWARDS 2021

indian responsible tourism awards 2021

Outlook RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

BEST FUTURE-FORWARD STATE

BEST ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD INITIATIVE

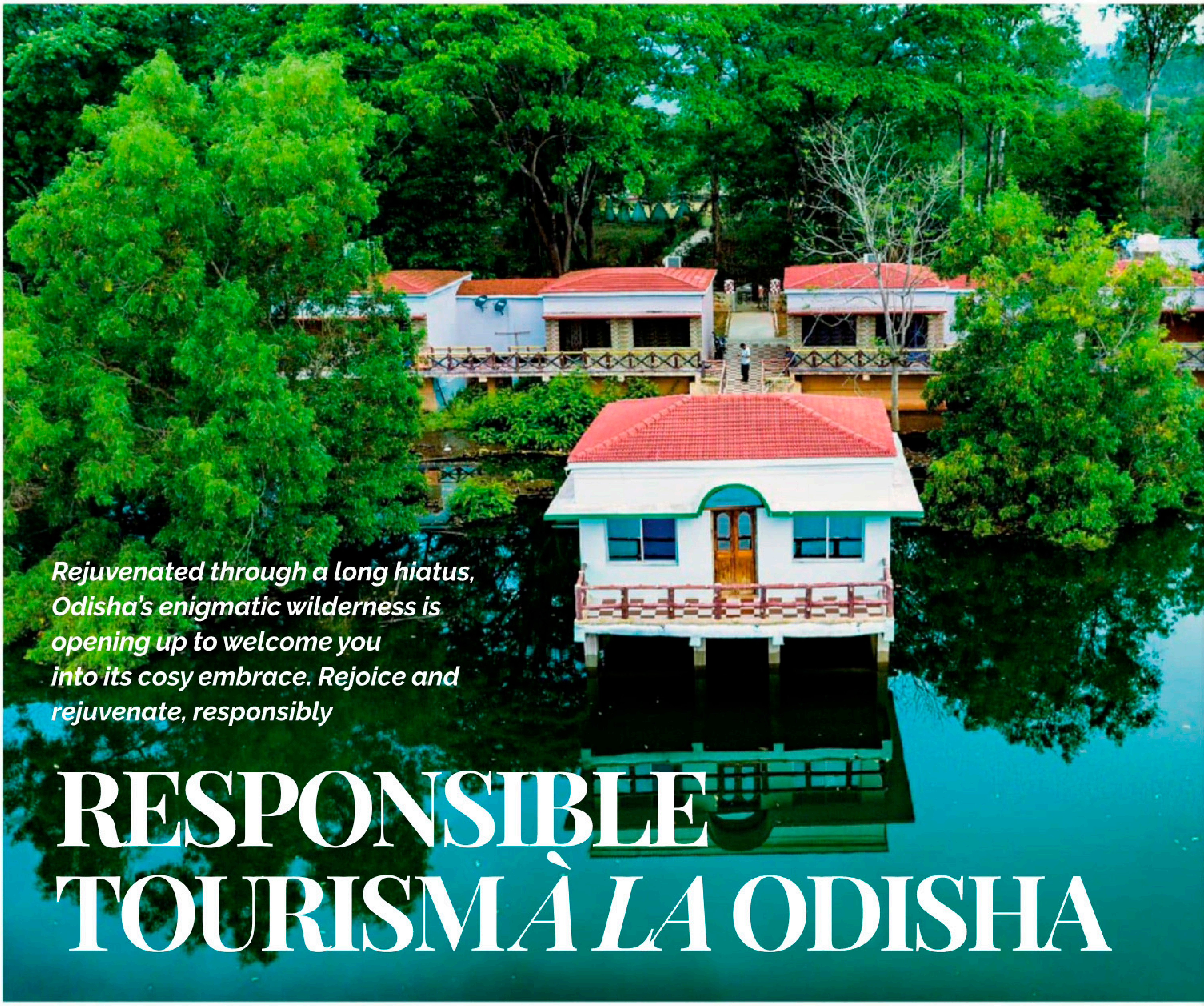
BEST RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN

UNWTO AFFILIATE MEMBER

world travel market

TO APPLY, LOG ON TO responsibletourismindia.com

ResponsibleTourism outlook_rt outlook_responsibletourism



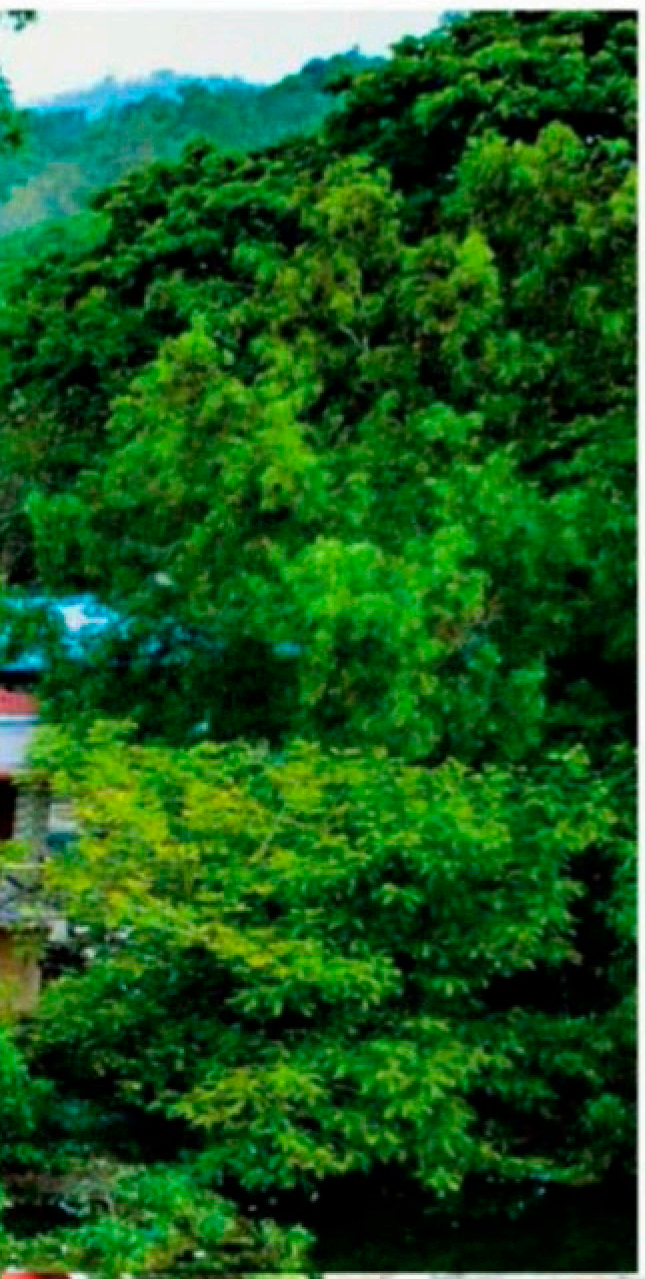
Rejuvenated through a long hiatus, Odisha's enigmatic wilderness is opening up to welcome you into its cosy embrace. Rejoice and rejuvenate, responsibly

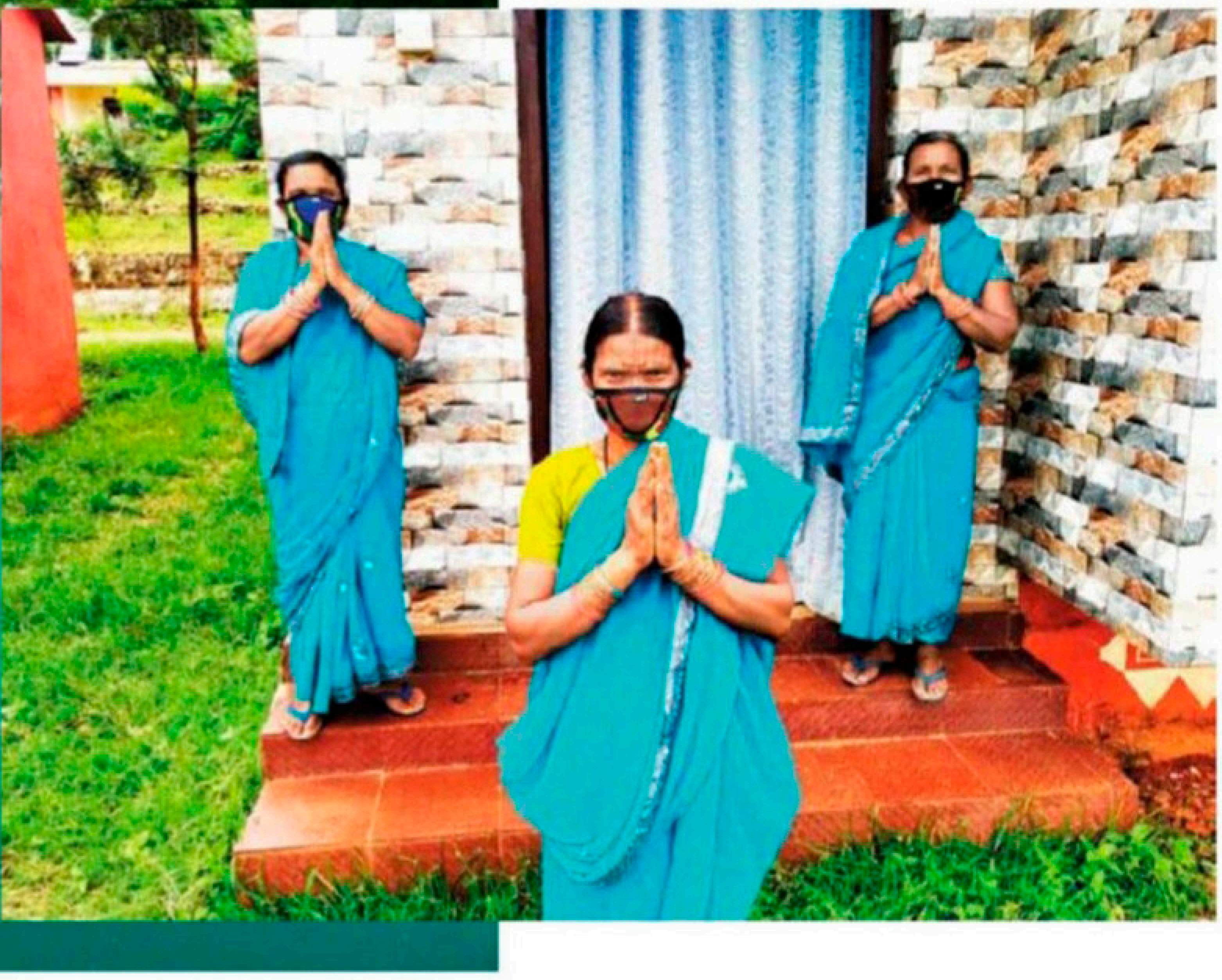
RESPONSIBLE TOURISM *À LA* ODISHA

Odisha boasts 47 Ecotour properties with about 300 accommodations (cottages, tents, treehouses, etc) across its length and breadth, in diverse ecosystems such as beaches, forests and protected areas, hill stations, tribal hinterlands, riverbanks and wetlands. Of the state's total population, around 83 per cent resides in rural and other non-urban areas. Their role in conserving the natural ecosystems and resources is undoubtedly pivotal.

In 2016, Odisha's Forest & Environment Department initiated its 'Community Managed Nature Tourism' model with the local community as prime stakeholders. Today, over 600 trained community members are directly engaged in hosting and serving visitors with unmatched simplicity and supreme quality. The project has emerged as a sustainable income generator for local communities whose lives earlier were heavily dependent on forest resources like honey, firewood, etc. In addition to those who are directly employed in the camps, five to six villages around each property now earn their livelihoods indirectly by providing daily requirements to the units by selling vegetables, handmade articles, milk, transport facilities, etc. Prominent units in Similipal and Satkosia Tiger Reserves have excelled, generating revenues of over ₹1 crore by hosting over 4,000 visitors per year. This initiative has won several awards, the most recent being India's Best Ecotourism Initiative at FICCI's Travel & Tourism Awards 2019.

Tourists can pick their choice—those desiring to simply retreat to nature's nest can opt for frugal retreats, while explorers with a zest for adventure may go and experience the rich nature camps. If the beach is beckoning you, choose to camp literally a few steps away from the waves at Bichitrapur, Habalikhati, Nuanai or Rajhans and Berhampura Nature Camps. If mystic highs are your calling, reach for Kandhamal's uncharted beauty in





GOVT. OF ODISHA
FOREST & ENVIRONMENT DEPTT.

Clockwise from facing page: Chitrakonda at Malkangiri; off-roading in the water; forest officials at Hirakud; and Ecotour hosts

Daringbadi, Mandasaru's Silent Valley and Phulbani or strap up your trekking gear for Saptasajya. Odisha's waterfalls and cascades are amongst its most serendipitous surprises; visitors can book stays at Sanaghagara, Khandadhar and Barehipani. Serious wildlife buffs and shutterbugs can opt for Mangalajodi in Chilika, Ramtirtha/ Jamuani/ Kumari in Similipal, Tikarpada/ Chhotkei in Satkosia, Debrigarh or Dangamala/ Gupti in Bhitarkanika National Park.

With tariffs ranging from just over ₹2,000 for a double-bedded accommodation to ₹9,000 for a 10-bedded dormitory a night, Ecotour Odisha offers max experience at min costs. Hygienic and wholesome meals are included in the package. Tourists can enjoy their share of leisure with abandon, through a host of activities such as cycling, birding, jungle trails, boating, outdoor games or stepping to the beats with locals by the bonfire. Stays and other services can be booked through their sites odishatourism.gov.in or ecotourodisha.com.

With the focus on the future, Department of Tourism and Department of Forest & Environment has jointly initiated a training course for Ecotour Odisha staff in COVID-19 risk control and mitigation in collaboration with IHM and IITTM. The ecotourism community members are being trained on-site in 10-day batches, which are inter alia imparting soft and technical skills which will help up the experience quotient.

For those looking for a sabbatical to unwind, it's a great idea to hit the beautiful roads that connect Odisha's beautiful landscapes. At a time when the tourism and hospitality sector, reeling from the pandemic's hit, is looking to spring back, Ecotour Odisha offers a vacation with a cause.

ODISHA
INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET.

radar

HERE,
THERE,
NOW &
SOON

LAND OF YOGIS 12

•

HAZRATGANJ 14

•

THE DANISH SUMMER 16

•

RHYTHM OF THE RAIN 17

NOT THE Hippie Trail

☒ DELHI TO LONDON BUS

If you're looking for the silver lining to this pandemic, it's what the millennials have been saying all along—YOLO. We're not about to spell that out for you, but here's what we *will* spell out: 20,000 kilometres, 70 days, 18 countries, two continents, one bus ride. Sounds ludicrous? Not anymore.

This reverse Hippie Trail (it does come back that route, though) is quite the *Eat, Pray, Love* journey. You will *Eat* the cake and have it too in the lap of luxury, ricketing (probably not) through the Silk Route in 4 and 5 star hotels. You will *Pray* to the 'Old Gods and the New' for your Central Asian escapade. And you'll *Love* the fact that although you're ₹15 lakh poorer, you're a European experience-of-a-lifetime richer.

20 lucky wanderers will undertake this land voyage in May 2021. The company, Adventures Overland, will offer four packages to choose from. You can Hop On-Hop Off through Southeast Asia to China, through Central Asia to Russia, and through Europe to London, individually. Or you can go all the way, taking in the sights, sounds and everything in between.

Visas, hotels, meals, guides, tours, permits, are all taken care of by the company, but it's going to be BYOB: buy your own booze!

Can't have it all now, can we?

» Individual legs will be priced accordingly, and 5 per cent GST will be added to all costs

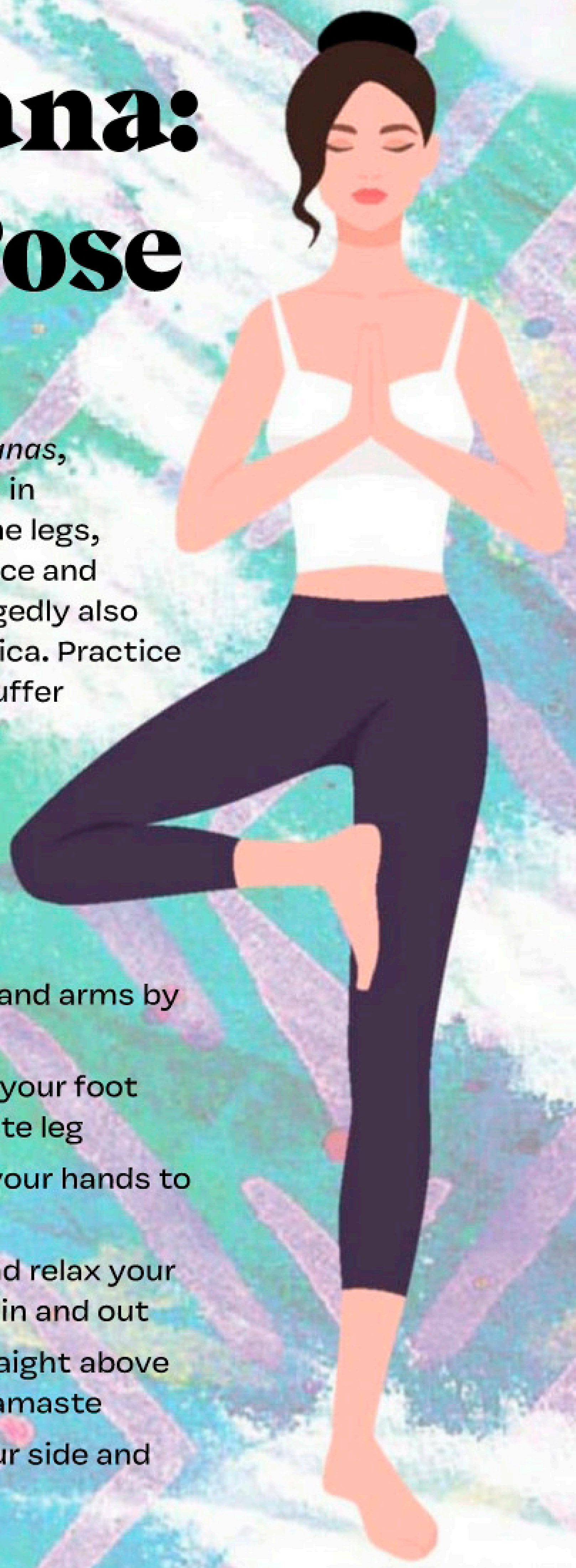
» bustolondon.in

Vrikshasana: the Tree Pose

Perhaps one of the most common *asanas*, Vrikshasana has a number of benefits in store for practitioners. It stretches the legs, back and arms, while improving balance and concentration. The tree pose has allegedly also helped alleviate certain cases of sciatica. Practice caution while doing this pose if you suffer from migraines, insomnia, low or high blood pressure. Always consult your doctor before trying any new form of exercise.

HOW TO DO VRIKSHASANA

1. Stand tall with your back straight and arms by your side
2. Bend one knee at a time and place your foot flat in the inner thigh of the opposite leg
3. Once you find your balance, bring your hands to a namaste
4. Straighten your body and spine, and relax your muscles as you take deep breaths in and out
5. You can slowly raise your arms straight above your head while maintaining the namaste
6. Slowly bring your arms back to your side and your foot back on the ground
7. Repeat with the other leg



WORD TO THE WISE

"During the changing season as the temperature drops suddenly, our immunity takes a hit too. To stay safe follow these simple eating rules:

» Give the digestive system a break and avoid processed foods, too much meat, and go gluten-free.

» Have lots of fruits and vegetables to score enough fibre and antioxidants to proactively boost immunity."

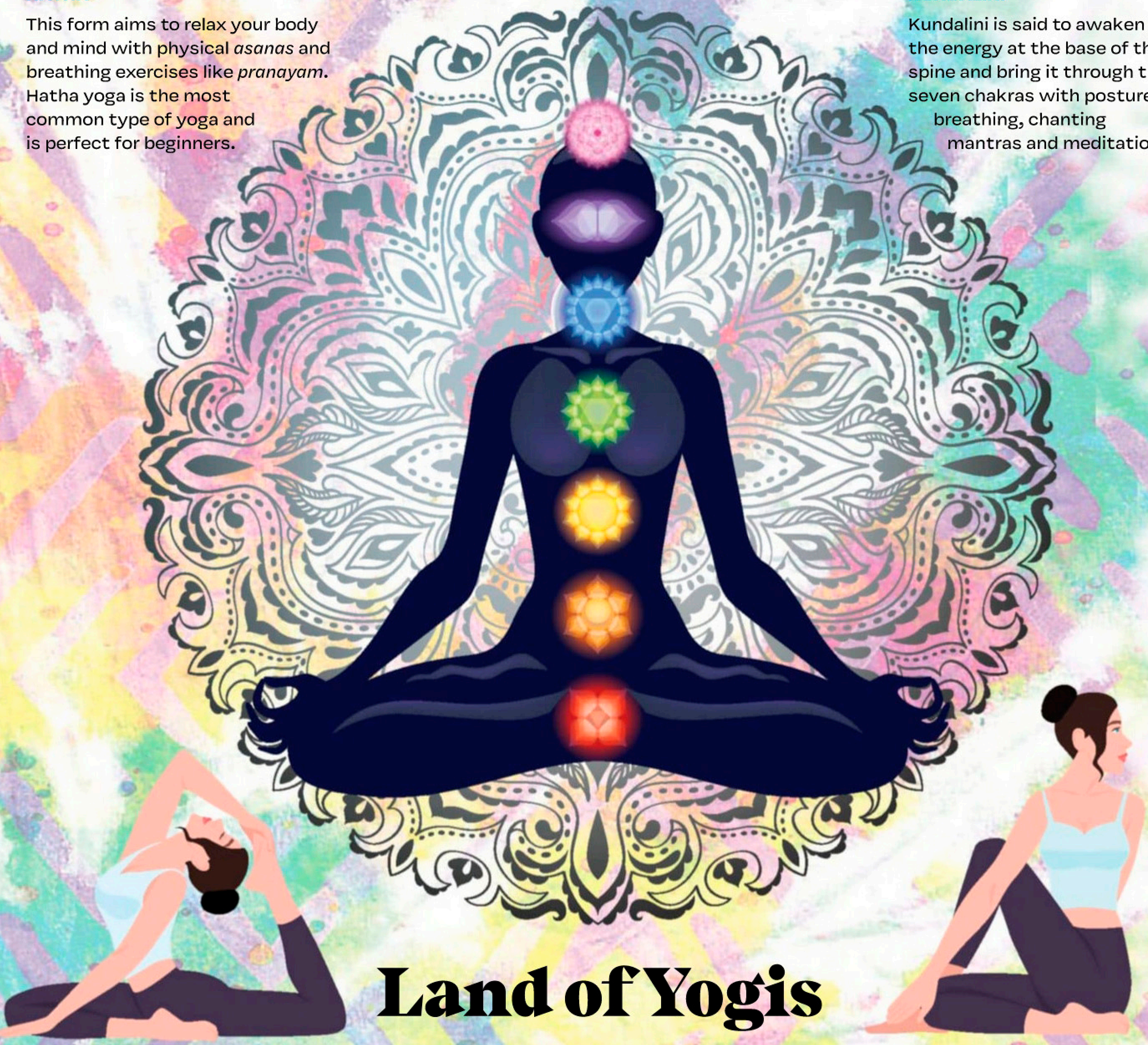
Kavita Devgan is a renowned nutritionist, columnist, author and speaker on health and lifestyle. Grab her latest book *Fix it with Food* to learn more about eating simpler, and living longer.

ON TREND: GOAT YOGA

A wildly popular trend circa 2017, goat yoga is quite the fun-filled, furry-footed venture. Yoga practitioners from various levels get downward and dirty with baby goats hop-skip-and-jumping all over them. Re-upped by its feature on Netflix's *Indian Matchmaking*, it's the one form of yoga where it's totally acceptable to be stuck in child's pose while snuggling a fuzzy goat-ling. Don't know about you but we certainly don't mind holding a plank if there's a baby goat hopping around our backs!

Land of Yogis

The practice of yoga has evolved and morphed into a host of different forms across the world; some intriguing, some not. But yoga in India is different—it's organic, and has as much to do with spirituality as physical exercise. Let's take a look at the six basic forms of yoga in the country.



HATHA

This form aims to relax your body and mind with physical *asanas* and breathing exercises like *pranayam*. Hatha yoga is the most common type of yoga and is perfect for beginners.

VINYASA

This form focuses on rapid and continuous movements flowing from one posture to the next. Synchronised breathing is an important aspect of Vinyasa.

KUNDALINI

Kundalini is said to awaken the energy at the base of the spine and bring it through the seven chakras with postures, breathing, chanting mantras and meditation.

SIVANANDA

A type of Hatha yoga, this includes a surya namaskar and goes through the 12 *asanas* created by Swami Sivananda.

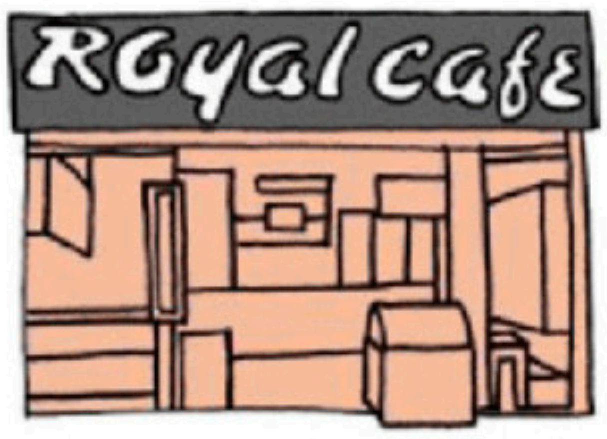
ASHTANGA

Similar to Vinyasa, Ashtanga focusses on a set order of *asanas* steadily increasing in difficulty. It's physically taxing and significantly heats the body.

IYENGAR

Established by yogi BKS Iyengar, this form pays great attention to the muscle alignment and finer details within each pose.

☒ **DOWNTOWN AREA IN CENTRAL LUCKNOW**



A

ROYAL CAFÉ With a legacy of 40 years, it's known for its delectable street food • ₹800 for two

» Do not miss out their signature Basket Chaat

Burma
BISCUIT CO.

B

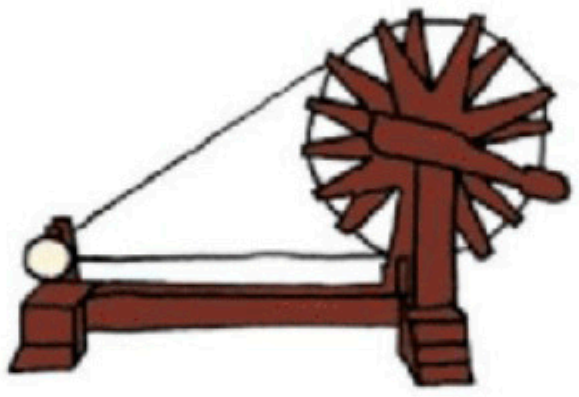
BURMA BISCUIT COMPANY The bakery-cum-patisserie has been in business since 1944 with a loyal patronage • ₹100 for two

» Try their iconic cakes and muffins

LUCKNOW'S EPICENTRE

Hazratganj

Nawabi and British style of architecture join hands with nostalgia to bring you all things vintage.



C

SHREE GANDHI ASHRAM KHADI GRAMUDYOG BHAVAN
From Khadi silk saris to organic skincare products, everything under one roof

Affordable Street Shopping

••

Lucknow's Iconic Eateries

••

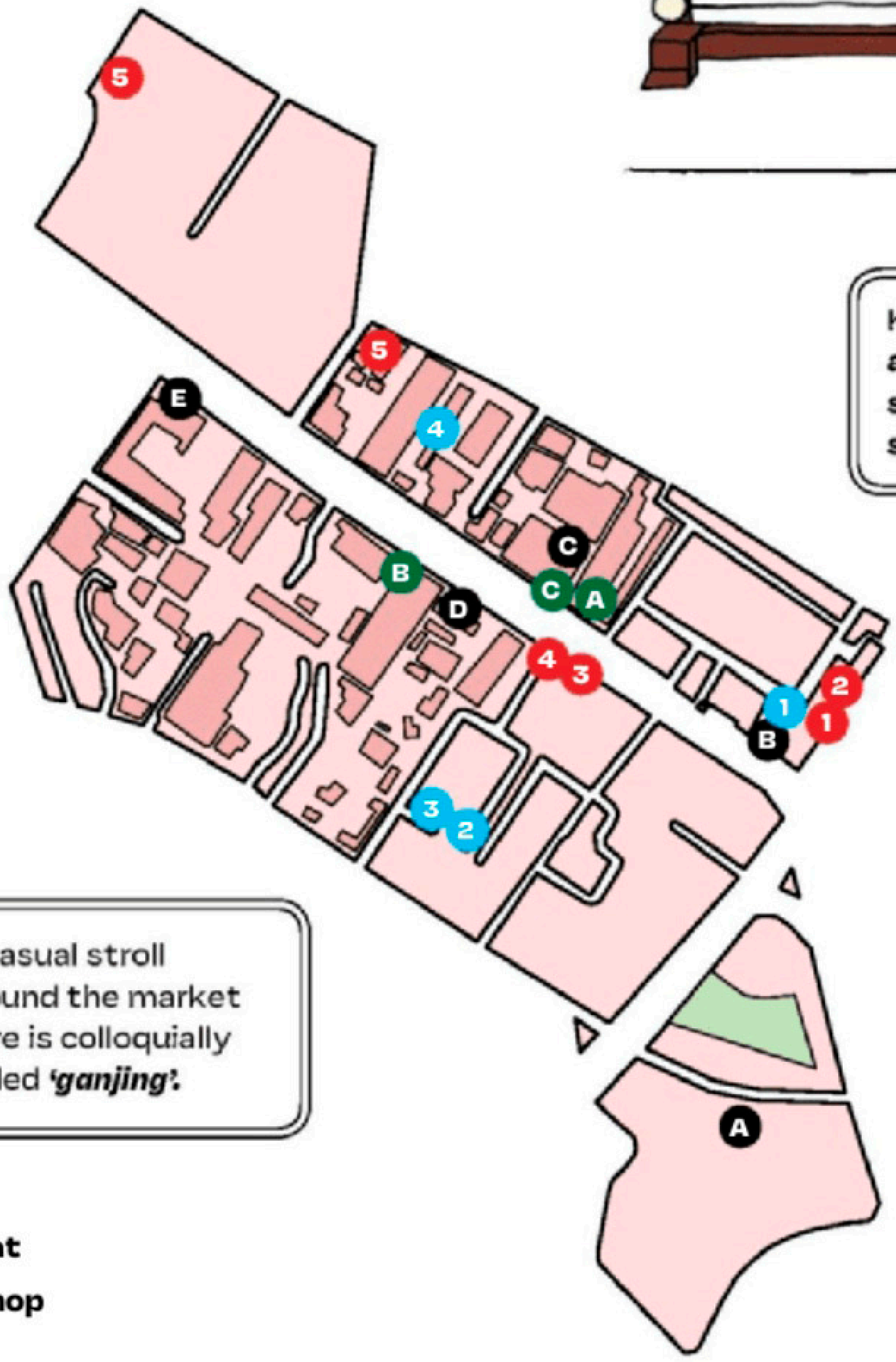
Vintage Cinemas

••

Walk Through History

••

Street Food Heaven



● **eat**
● **shop**

Keep an eye out for **brick and mortar shops,** selling **second-hand books** and **unique stationery items.**

Explore the market post sundown for an unparalleled experience.

A casual stroll around the market here is colloquially called ***'ganjing'.***

Look for **Atal Chowk** in maps

Metro: Hazratganj Metro Station

It's almost a steal

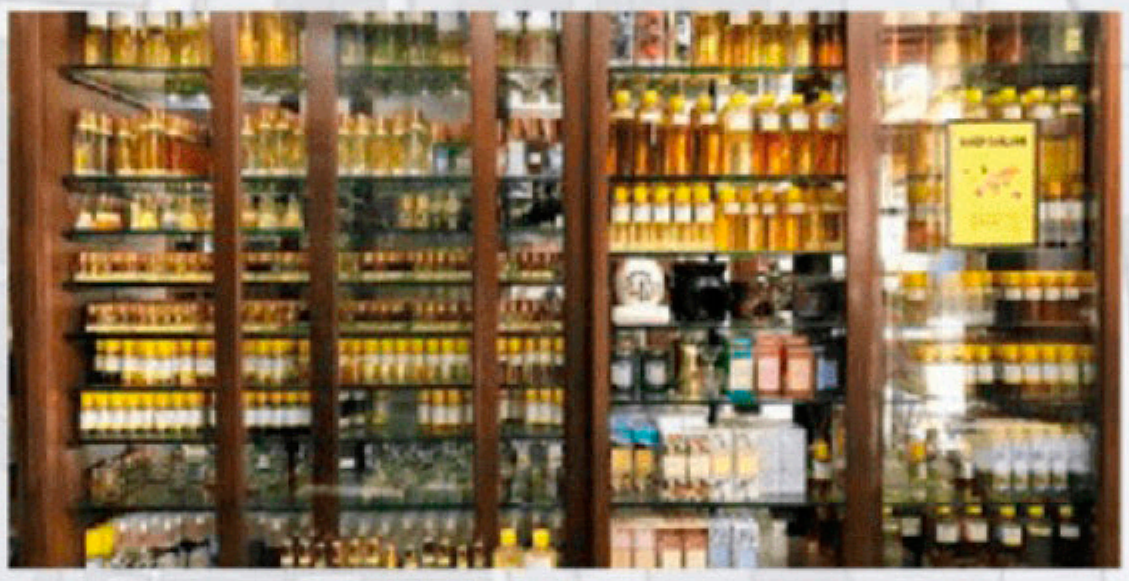
Fragrances • Chikankari • Knick-Knacks • Handicrafts

① **KASHMIR GOVT ARTS EMPORIUM** Authentic Kashmiri handicrafts

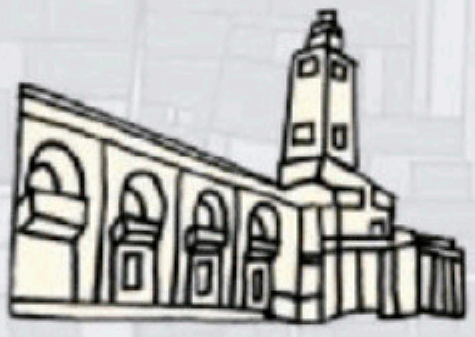
② **NAZRANA CHIKAN** Chikan kurtas

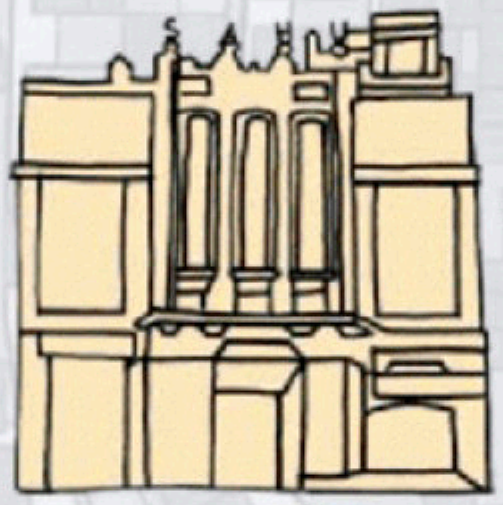
③ **SUGANDH CO.** Attars, essential oils and fragrances

④ **LOVE LANE** Haggle for a good deal



Iconic Buildings





Ⓐ **GENERAL POST OFFICE** Gothic-style building, formerly Ring Theatre, used for screening English films and dramas

Ⓑ **UNIVERSAL BOOKSELLERS** A fourth-generation bookshop with an 80-year-legacy

Ⓒ **SAHU CINEMA** Single screen theatre since 1932

Ⓓ **MINOO & DINSHAW BOOKSELLERS** Iconic bookshop

Ⓔ **MAYFAIR BUILDING** A former theatre, ballroom and restaurant for the British

Eat the world

From sweet to savoury, what's your pick?

① **COOPERATIVE INDIAN COFFEE HOUSE** Oldest coffee shop in Lucknow

② **JJ BAKERS** Cakes and speciality breads

③ **MOTI MAHAL** *Imarti* and *rabri*

④ **CHOWDHURY SWEET HOUSE** Iconic ice creams

⑤ **BAJPAYEE KACHODI BHANDAR** Legendary breakfast joint

⑥ **THE CHERRY TREE CAFÉ** Cheesecakes, grandma's tea cakes and choco-chip cookies

Do not miss out on the **hole-in-the-wall *paan* shops** that have a variety of offerings.

Compiled by **SIMRRAN GILL**
Illustrated by **RANGEET GHOSH**

MAN IN EUROPE

16

Living in Sweden for over 12 years, he hopes to travel the world in a boat

NITIN CHAUDHARY

The Danish Summer

THIS SUMMER HAS BEEN an exceptional one in Scandinavia. On most days, temperature soared in the high twenties, the sun beamed unrestrained from any passing clouds, and the blue waters of the Baltic Sea shimmered underneath. On days like these, Danes, declared the happiest people in the world, pour out on the Strøget, the city's pedestrian street.

Last week, on one such sunny afternoon, I decided to take a stroll on the Strøget. Denmark had just recently allowed people from southern Sweden in, and I didn't want to let go of the opportunity to visit one of my favourite cities in the world.

Strøget runs from the town centre Rådhuspladsen through the shopping thoroughfare of Copenhagen to Nyhavn. Nyhavn is perhaps the most recognisable neighbourhood in all of Denmark. It is marked by old pastel-coloured buildings and a waterfront, where Danes and tourists sit in open-air cafés eating smørrebrød sandwiches. There was a mild cheer in the air, and artists occupied corners of this neighbourhood street, punctuating it with their flair.

I sat at a waterfront café, sipping coffee, breathing the air infused with the smell of the sea, listening to the songs from the street singer, and watching expensive yachts bobbing up and down in the Öresund Straight. At this moment, everything looked fine. Although just for a few hours, we all seemed to have collectively dropped the fear and decided that things are normal. I relished this semblance of normalcy with each sip of coffee. I left the festivity of Nyhavn behind me as I walked to yet another favourite spot of mine in Copenhagen—Tivoli.

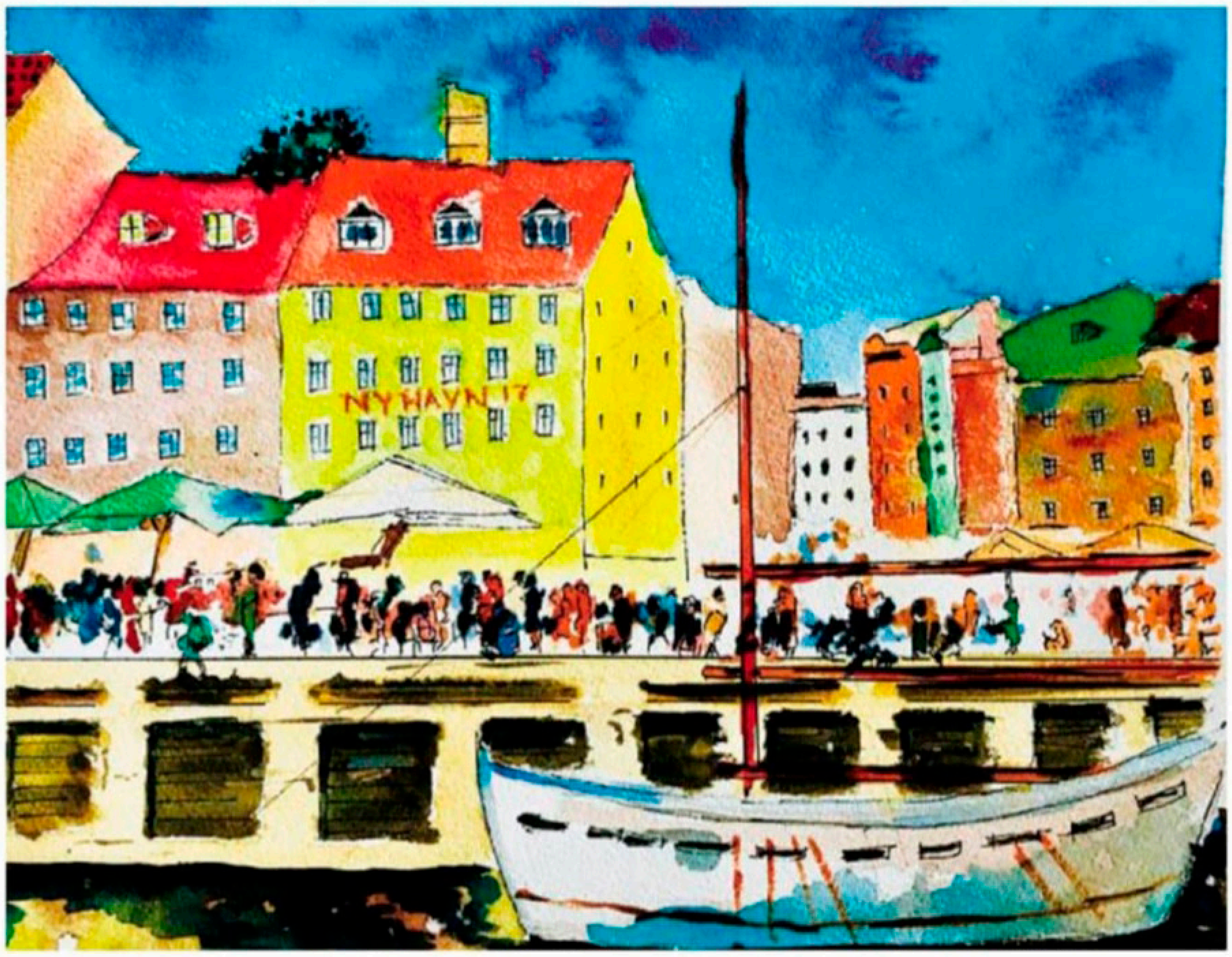
Nyhavn is marked by old pastel-coloured buildings and a waterfront, where Danes and tourists sit in open-air cafés eating smørrebrød sandwiches

To the outsiders, Tivoli may seem like just another amusement park. To the locals, it means much more. Tivoli threw its gates open in 1841, when a Dane, Georg Carstensen, inspired by all the amusement parks that he had seen abroad, sought the Danish king's permission to open one in Copenhagen. Such was its success that even Walt Disney took inspiration from Tivoli and tried to replicate Tivoli's mood and atmosphere for his parks.

In normal times, I would have taken a few rides, and relished the artificially generated thrill. But today I decided to stay on the ground and watch others hop into their rides. On the bench where I sat, next to me sat a man eating ice cream. He was perhaps in his late fifties. He saw me observing him, and smiled back.

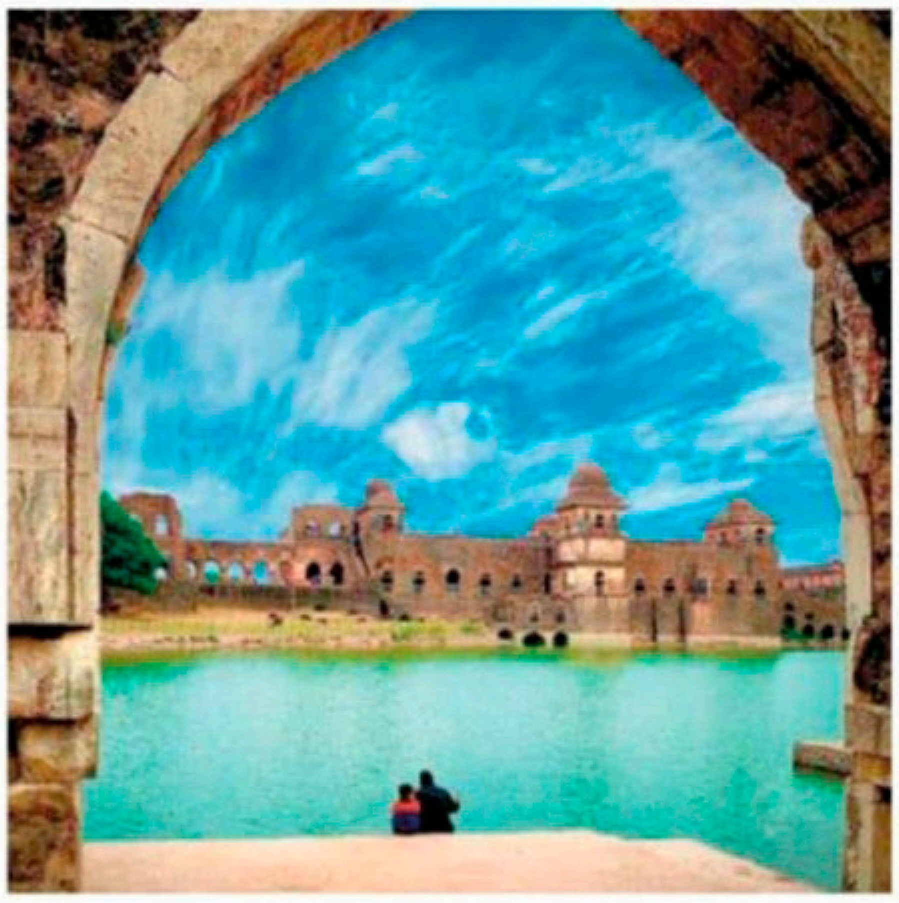
"I have been doing this for the past 40 years," he said. "Eating ice cream here every summer." Not everyone comes to Tivoli to take the rides. I decided to give him company and got myself an ice cream as well. There we sat, a safe two metres apart, eating ice creams at Tivoli on this warm, sunny afternoon.

Above us, the carousel twirled, and the kids in it hollered in euphoria.



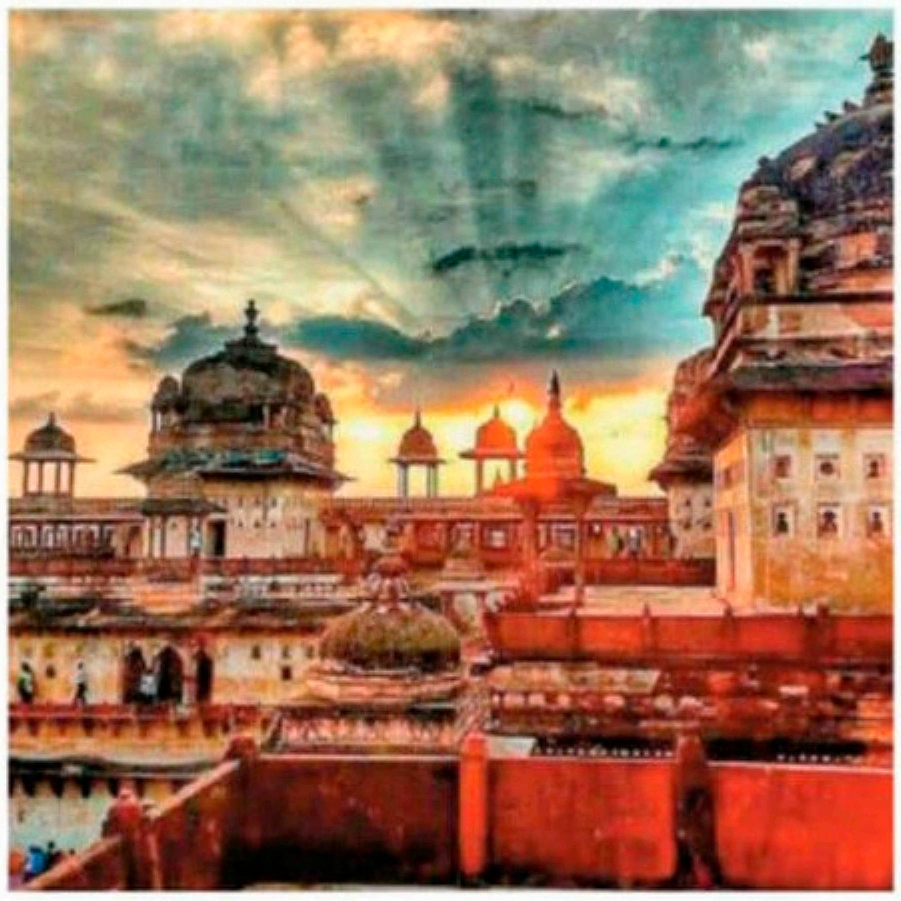
↖ Nyhavn is perhaps the most recognisable neighbourhood in all of Denmark

ILLUSTRATION: NITIN CHAUDHARY



☒ **MANDU** Rising up from the depths of shimmering emerald waters

@_mr_n_i_k

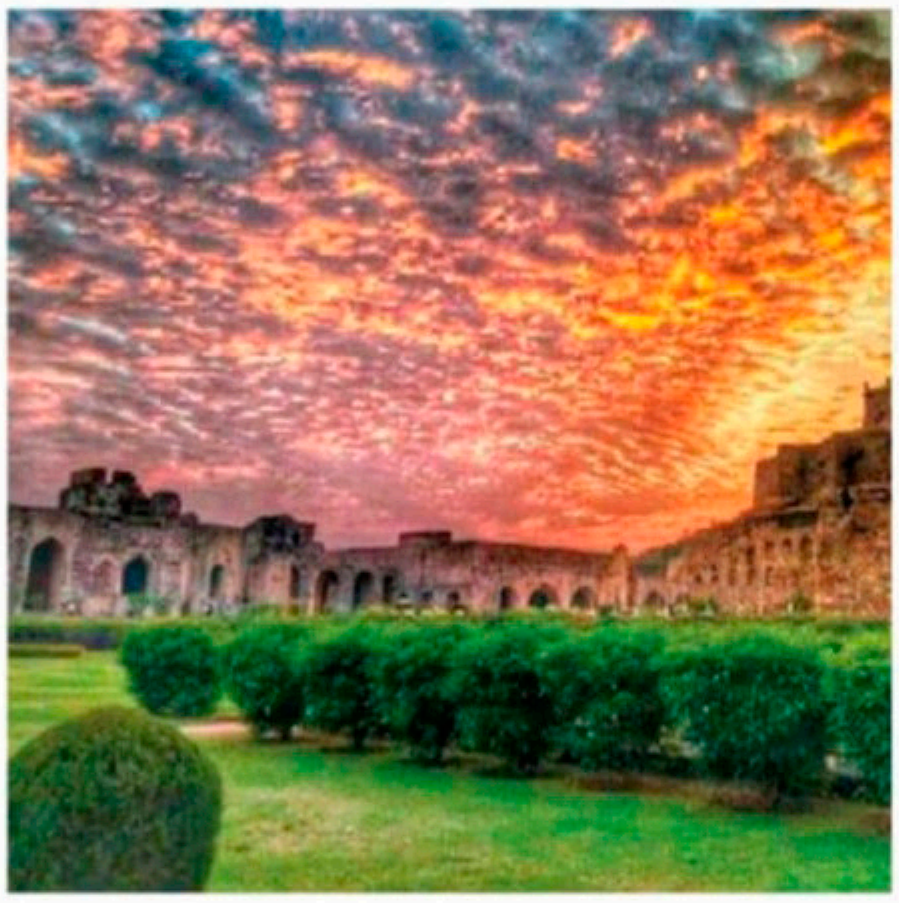


☒ **ORCHHA** Dreaming of revisiting the past in the present

@we_luv_bundelkhand

☒ **RAJGAD FORT** Swatches of green adorning the royal abode

@travelling_lats

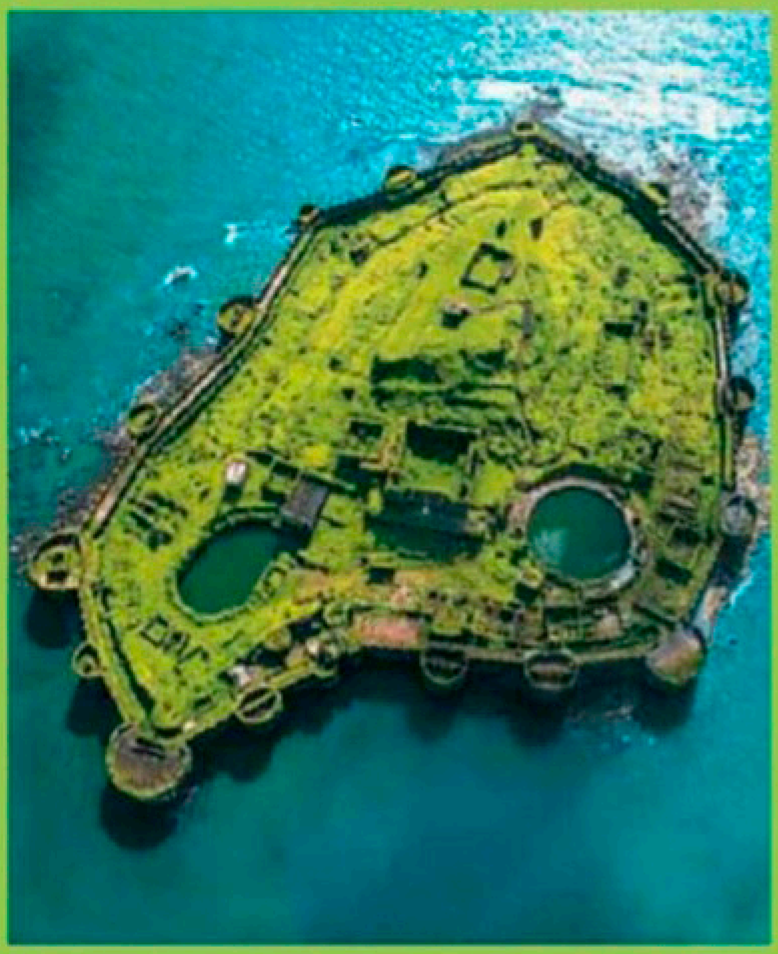


☒ **TELANGANA** A deep manifested past buried under the setting sun

@whatever_tania

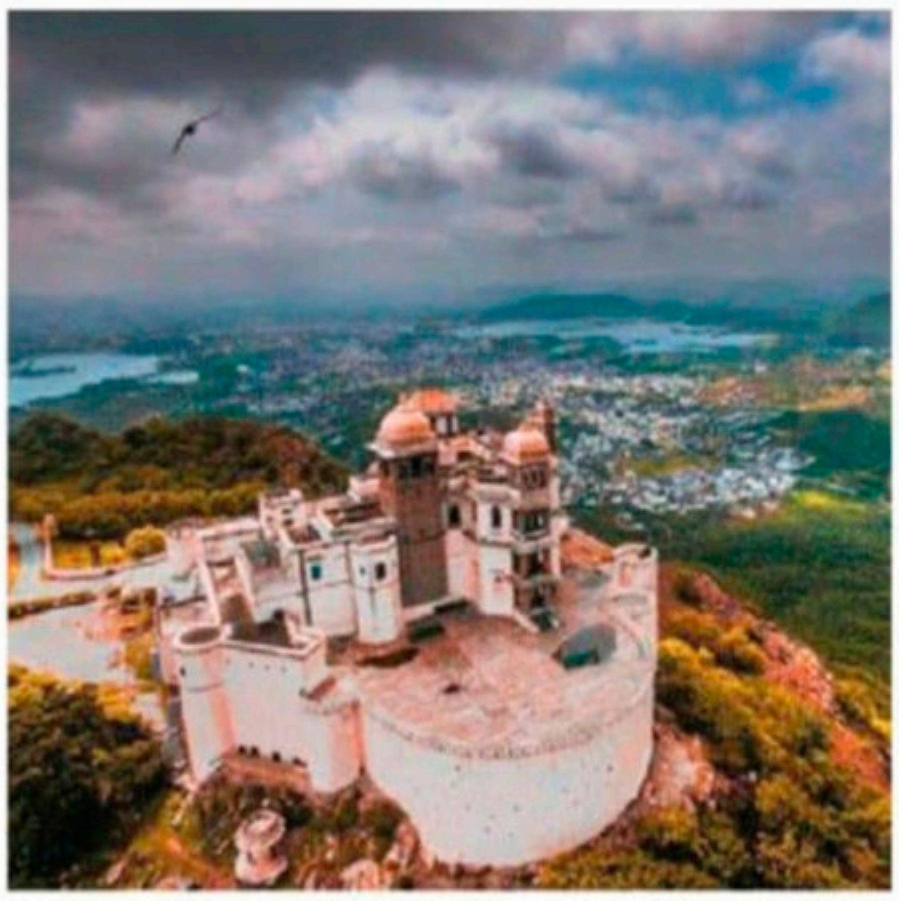
Rhythm of the Rain

As the thunderclap paves the way for light showers, it's time to hit the road. These are the getaways we can't get over!



@animeshkshatriya

MURUD, MAHARASHTRA
Undefeated and unexplored, the remnants of the royal past lie in the heart of the sea

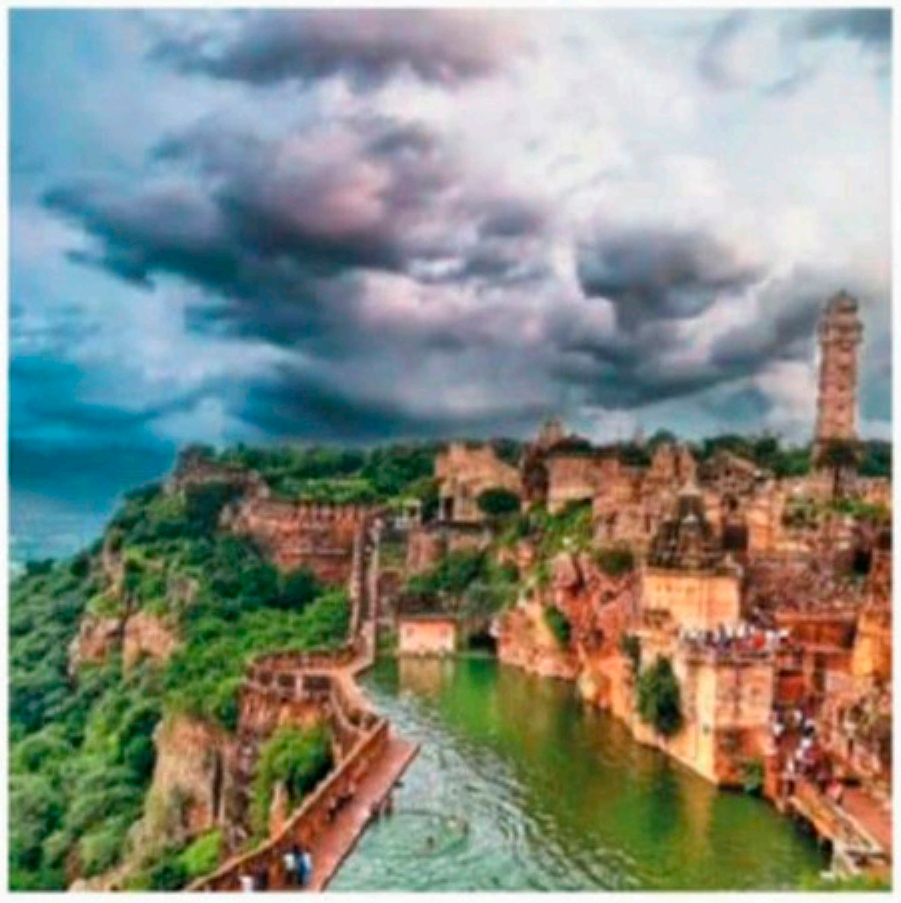


☒ **UDAIPUR** The city of lakes recalls the elegance of a bygone era

@ankit_rinayat

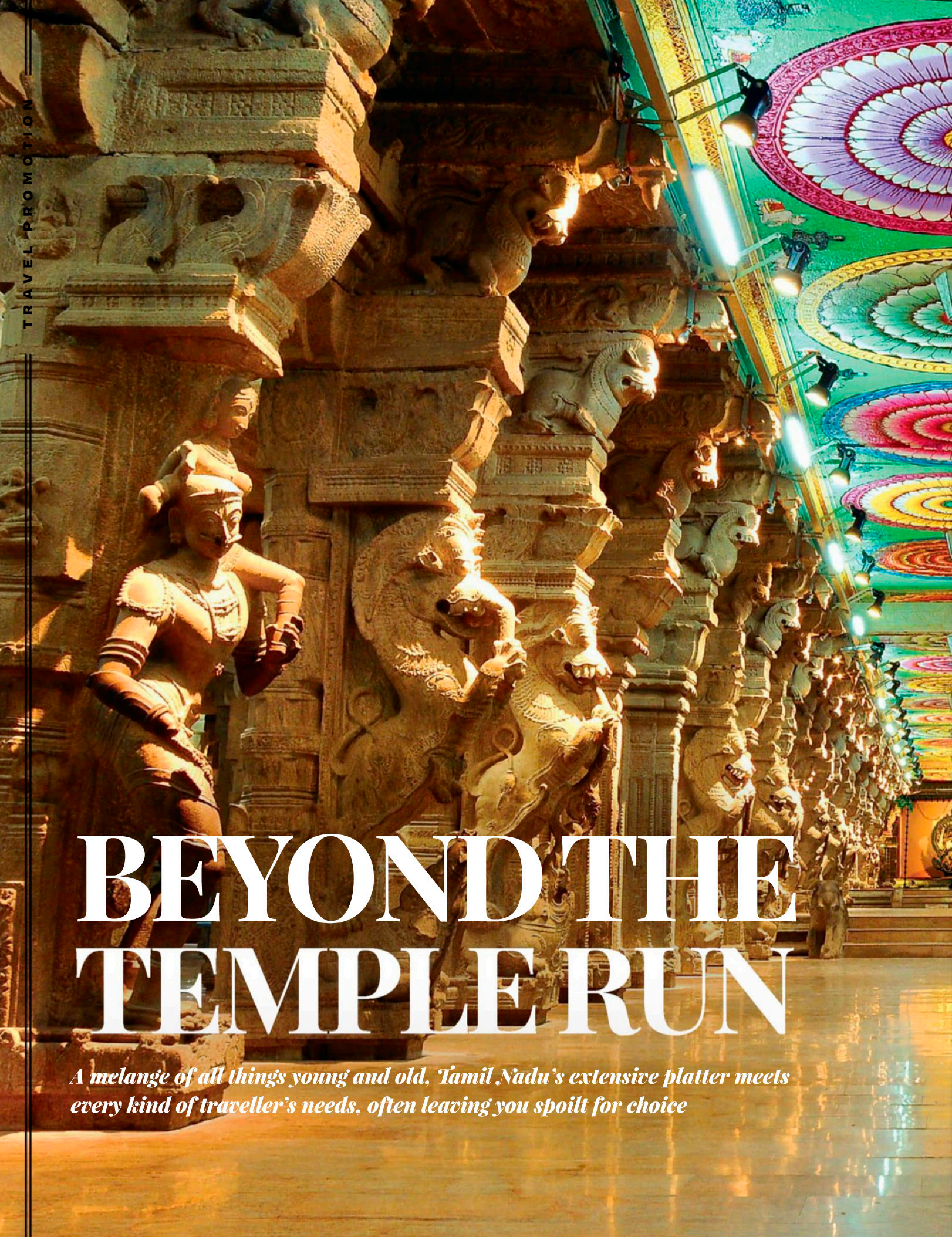
☒ **SAJJAN GARH** Some paths can't be discovered without getting lost

@cinematicronnie



☒ **CHITTOR FORT** A historical marvel shrouded in myths and legends

@archnaaaah



BEYOND THE TEMPLE RUN

A melange of all things young and old, Tamil Nadu's extensive platter meets every kind of traveller's needs, often leaving you spoilt for choice

The thousand pillar mandapam

Heritage, nature or wildlife. What's your pick? Occupying the bottom stretch of the Coromandel Coast, Tamil Nadu sits comfortably in the lap of nature. Supremely rich in culture and heritage, it is home to the ancient Chola Dynasty, the state has a wealth of temple architecture. A social-distancing friendly destination, especially in the hill stations, the towering mountains and charming landscape offer countless reasons as to why this southern gem should be your next vacation destination post the pandemic.

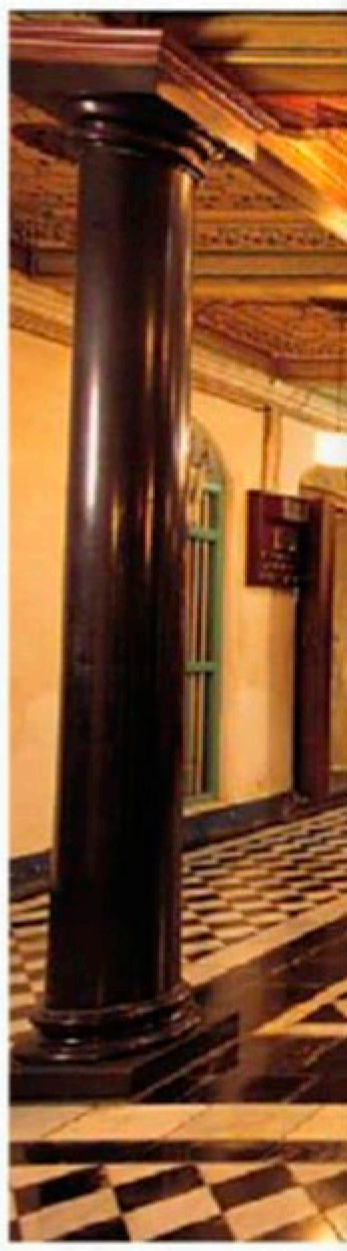
STEP BACK IN TIME

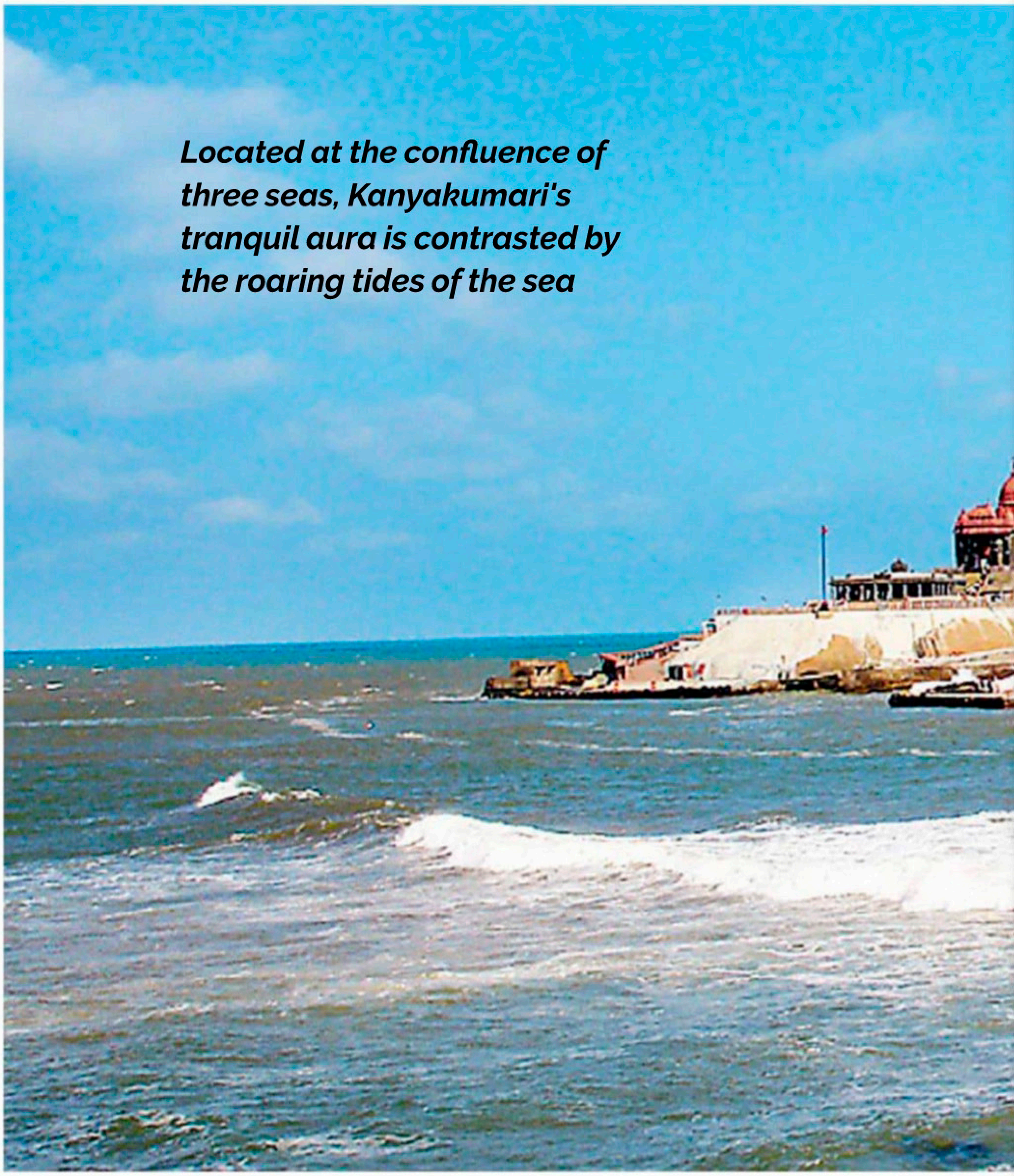
The rich history of Tamil Nadu has resulted in many notable sights across the state. Its diversity is best exemplified in the plethora of religious sites including a number of churches, mosques and even Buddhist monasteries.

The Chola dynasty that ruled the region till the 13th century is credited with the most outstanding temples that showcase the grandeur of the bygone era. During their reign of nearly 1,500 years, the Chola temples became the hub of economic, political and cultural activities. Head to the Great Living Chola Temples, a Unesco World Heritage Site, to witness their architectural brilliance. The site includes three great temples—the Brihadeeswarar Temple at Thanjavur, the Airavatesvara Temple at Darasuram and the Gangaikonda Cholapuram Temple at Jayankondam.

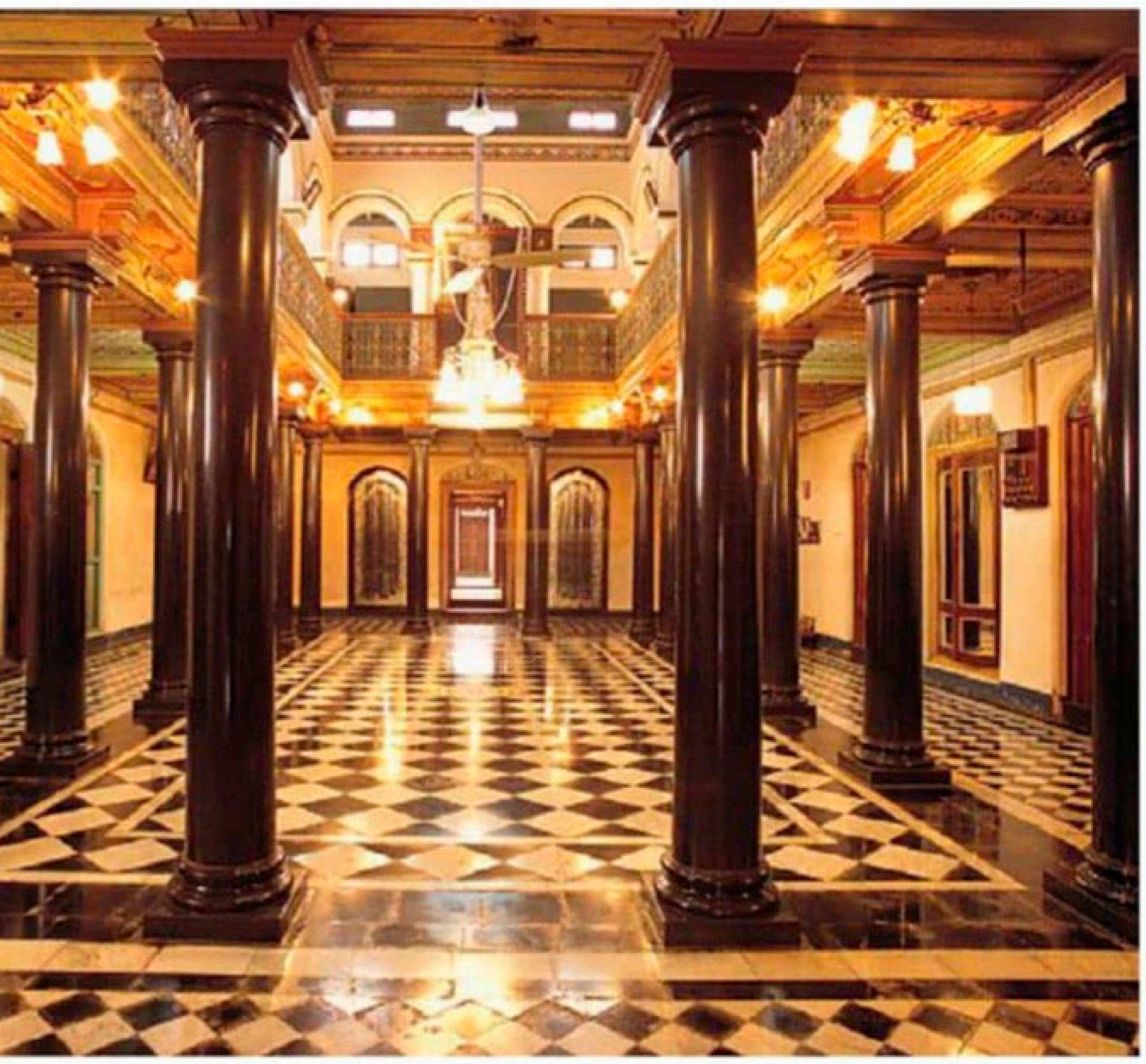
Many of the heritage buildings like the Chettinad mansions have now been converted into heritage hotels. Their unique architecture, peaceful ambience and delectable cuisine are great tourist attractions.

The Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram, another Unesco World Heritage Site, is a collection of monolithic monuments built by the Pallava kings in the 7th and 8th centuries. The rock sculptures are inspired by tales from Mahabharata and are a sight to behold. Some of the prominent ones are Arjuna's Penance, Pancha Rathas,

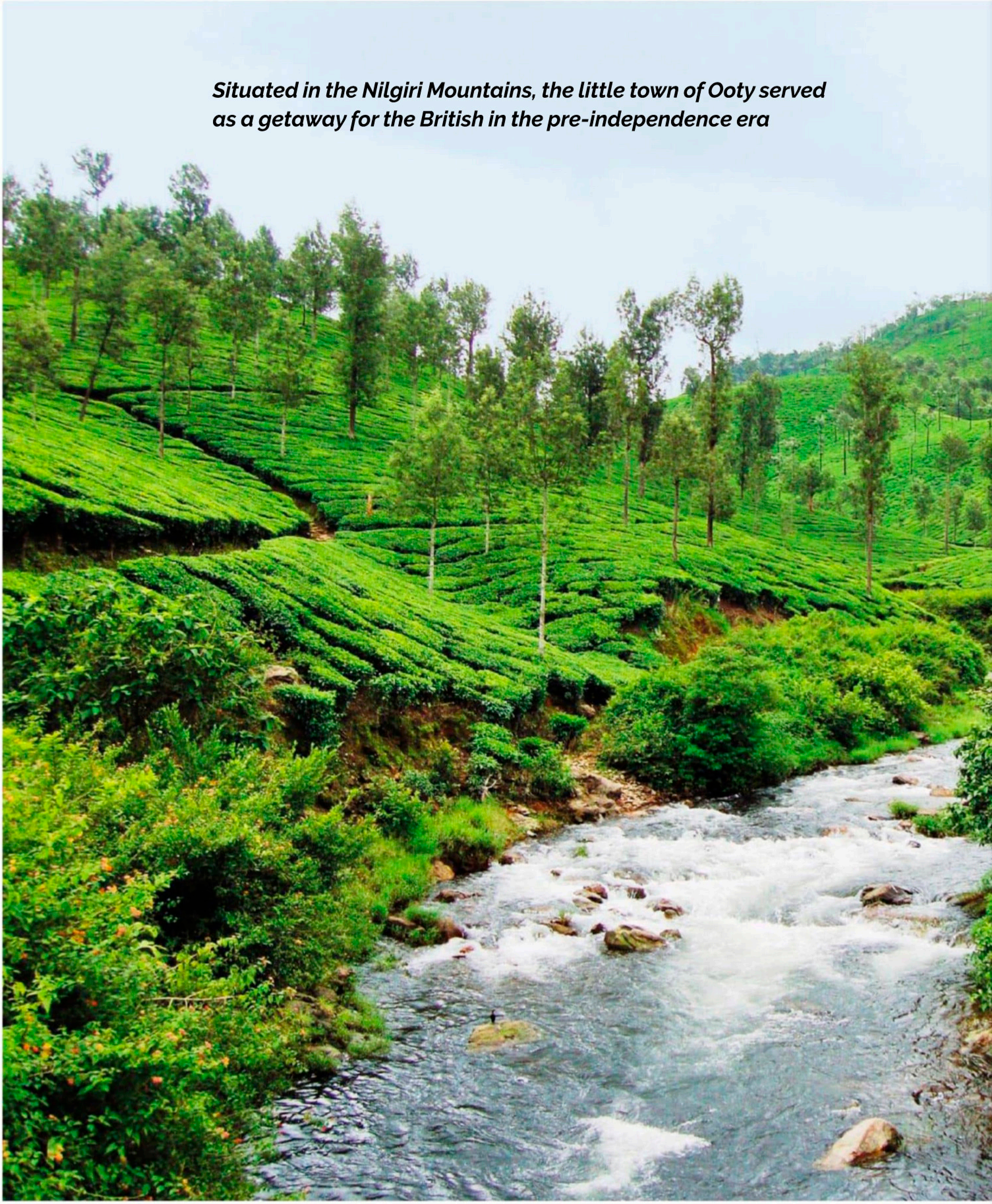




Located at the confluence of three seas, Kanyakumari's tranquil aura is contrasted by the roaring tides of the sea



Clockwise from here: Pancha Rathas; Vivekananda Rock Memorial and statue of poet Thiruvalluvar; Airavatesvara temple in Darasuram; and Chettinad mansion in Kanadukathan



Situated in the Nilgiri Mountains, the little town of Ooty served as a getaway for the British in the pre-independence era

The tranquil hill station of Valparai in Coimbatore

Varaha Mandapam, Mahisha suramarthini Mandapa etc., Located in the heart of Madurai, the Meenakshi Temple, built in 6th century BC, is one of the most iconic attractions down south. Madurai situated on the banks of River Vaigai, has a rich cultural heritage passed on from the great Tamil Sangam era which is more than 2500 years old. It was the capital city of Pandya Kings. Meenakshi Temple is dedicated to Parvathi or Meenakshi – the consort of Lord Shiva. It is a splendid example of Dravidian Architecture. The temple has doors in all four directions for devotees to enter. However, it's the Koodal Azhagar Temple here that is believed to be older than the Meenakshi Temple. Dedicated to Lord Vishnu, one can spot the three varied statues in different postures—standing, sitting and reclining.

ALONG THE COAST

With the Indian Ocean in the south and the Bay of Bengal in the east, this Tamil Nadu is the perfect destination for a beach holiday. Each beach has its own charm with resorts and tiny cafés serving delicacies as you gaze into that picture-perfect sunset.

Apart from the monolithic structures, the sandy beach of Mahabalipuram also attracts hordes of tourists from all over the world. If you love swimming and windsurfing then this is the ideal spot for you. The Mahabalipuram Dance Festival held during winters every year is another reason to hit this beach town.

Do not miss out on the seafare at Olaikuda, a small fishing village in Rameshwaram, replete with coral reefs, ideal for scuba divers.

The southernmost tip of the Indian mainland, Kanyakumari is located at the confluence of the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. Its tranquil aura is contrasted by the roaring tides of the sea, making it the perfect getaway for those who prefer the solitude of a less-touristy beach. The sight of the waves striking the rocks makes for an alluring visual. While in Kanyakumari, you can pay your respects to goddess Kanya Kumari at the 3,000-year-old Kumari Amman Temple, visit the

Padmanabhapuram Palace and the century-old lighthouse. A memorial dedicated to Swami Vivekananda, 500 meters from main land, accessible by a ferry service and gigantic 40 meters high statue of Tiruvalluvar, a great poet – saint are major attractions.

If you're looking to get away from the bustle of city life, then you surely need a holiday to the 'lost town' of Dhanushkodi at the southernmost end of Rameshwaram. Surrounded by the Bay of Bengal on one side and Indian Ocean on the other, Dhanushkodi Beach offers a chance to encounter the thrills of sea surfing. With every beach extraordinary in its own sense, it is a sweet addition to your Tamil Nadu vacation.

ENCOUNTER NATURE'S BOUNTY

There's no doubt that Tamil Nadu is a nature lover's paradise. With its quaint hill stations, including the likes of Ooty, Kodaikanal, Coonoor, Yelagiri and many more situated in the Western Ghats, it offers ample scope for eco-tourism.

Known as the 'Queen of Hills', Ooty or Udhagamandalam is one of the most popular hill stations in the region. Situated in the Nilgiri Mountains, this little town served as a getaway for the British in the pre-independent era. A boat

Clockwise from here: the endangered Nilgiri tahr; ride the Nilgiri Mountain Railway; the ancient Brihadeeswarar Temple; and Vedanthangal, one of the oldest bird sanctuaries in India

ride at Ooty Lake can be very refreshing. If a heritage ride is on your mind, then the Nilgiri Mountain Railway is just the one for you. Declared a Unesco World Heritage Site in 2005, it was first built by the British in 1908. The train runs from Mettupalayam to Udagamandalam, via Coonoor. As the train chugs over bridges, be prepared to be awed by the vistas of mountains, valleys and tea plantations along the way.

The journey to upper Bhavani Lake located within the deep jungles is worthwhile and if you are lucky you might even spot wild cats and peacocks. You can spend the night at the forest boat house near Pykara Lake. The highest point in the Nilgiri Mountains, the Doddabetta Peak in Ooty is a real treat to the eyes, offering a breathtaking view of the city's skyline.

Endowed with an abundance of natural wealth, the hinterlands of Tamil Nadu are perfect for trekking. Book a curated walking tour for a peaceful escape.

Kodaikanal, nestled in the Palani Hills is perfect for those looking for something a bit more offbeat and away from the typical touristy crowd. Be it a boat ride along the star-shaped Kodaikanal Lake or capturing the ethereal beauty from the Pillar Rocks, where three vertical granite boulders play hide and seek with mists, this resort town creates the ideal setting for you to connect with nature. Apart from its manicured cliffs and rolling slopes, the charming hill station is known for its mesmeric cascading waterfalls. The Bear Shola Falls and Vattakanal Falls are both sights to behold especially during the monsoons.

INTO THE WILD

With as many as 15 wildlife and bird sanctuaries, five national parks and four tiger reserves, the sheer number of flora and fauna is incentive enough for travellers to visit the state.

Located at the foothills of the Nilgiris, Mudumalai National Park is a must-visit on a first timer's itinerary. Established in 1940, it is an integral part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. Home to many endangered species like the royal Bengal tiger and the Asiatic wild dog, reports suggest that nearly 13 per cent of the mammal species in India can be found in Mudumalai. Bird watchers are in for a ride as one can spot the crested serpent eagle and the tiny-eared owl.

Catch a glimpse of the wild cats at the Anamalai Tiger Reserve. Situated in the Anamalai Hills of Coimbatore, the reserve is home to not only tigers but many other species such as spotted deer and panthers. A biodiversity hotspot in its truest sense, you can find more than 250 species of birds here.

Offering a real insight into urban wilderness, the Guindy National Park in Chennai serves as the humble abode of a large number of migratory birds, reptiles, blackbucks, jackals, pangolins and Indian civets among many others. For the adventure lovers, Mukurthi National Park in the Nilgiri Hills has some of the most beautiful trekking routes up its sleeve.

enchanting tamil nadu
experience yourself

LIFE IS SHORT, AND THE WORLD IS WIDE

explore

PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK

PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK

THE KONKAN COAST 36

•

DON'T WORRY, BE HAMPI 48

•

TO THE LAIR OF THE FLYING TIGRESS 56

Padmasambhava, or Guru Rinpoche, is said to have meditated in about 13 small monasteries in the 8th century. He meditated for four months at the Taktsang Monastery, one of the 13 'tiger lairs', before vanquishing local demons in Paro. He is credited with the introduction of Buddhism in Bhutan.

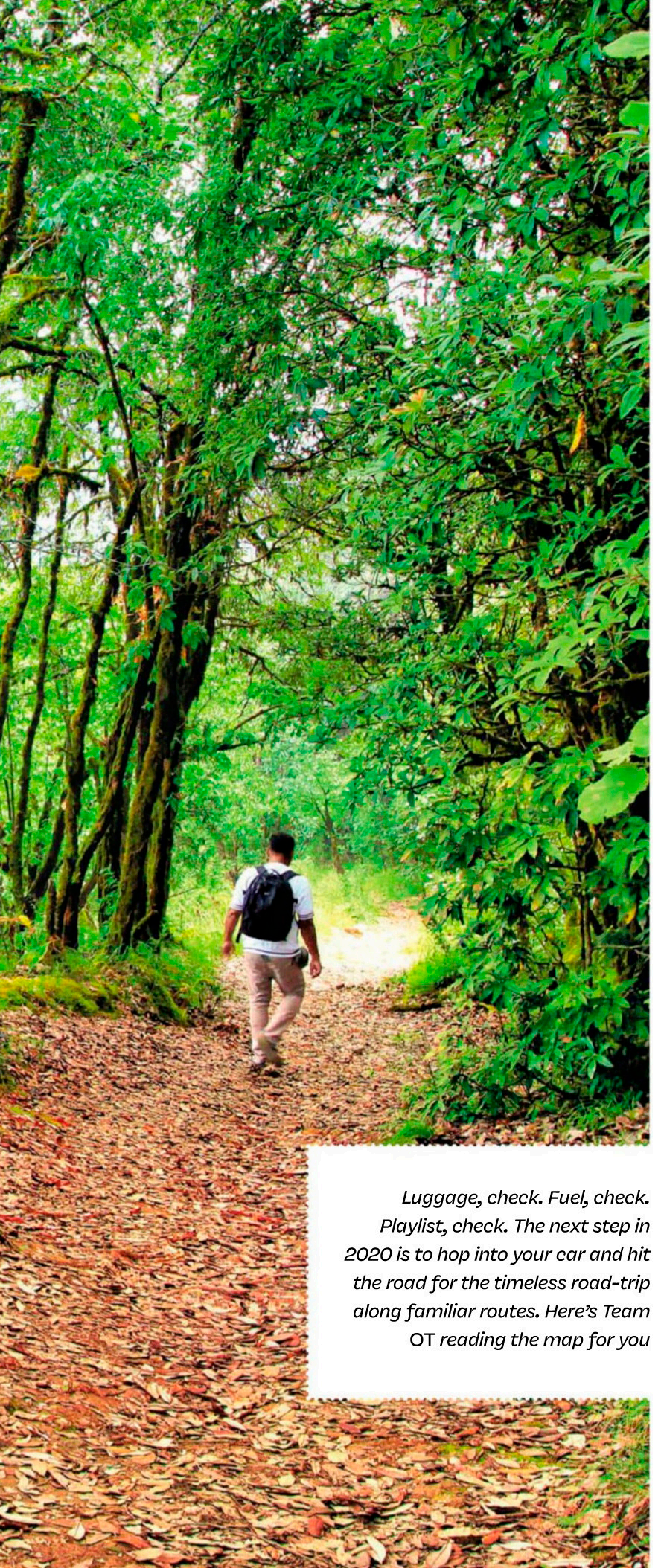
THE long JOURNEY

* * *
Coastal Drives
Kerala, Goa,
Odisha

* * *
Nature Trails
Madhya Pradesh,
Uttarakhand

* * *
Heritage
Uttar Pradesh,
Rajasthan

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK



Luggage, check. Fuel, check. *Playlist, check. The next step in 2020 is to hop into your car and hit the road for the timeless road-trip along familiar routes. Here's Team* OT *reading the map for you*

* **Nainital is known as the lake district of India and the famous Naini Lake is surrounded by legends and myths**

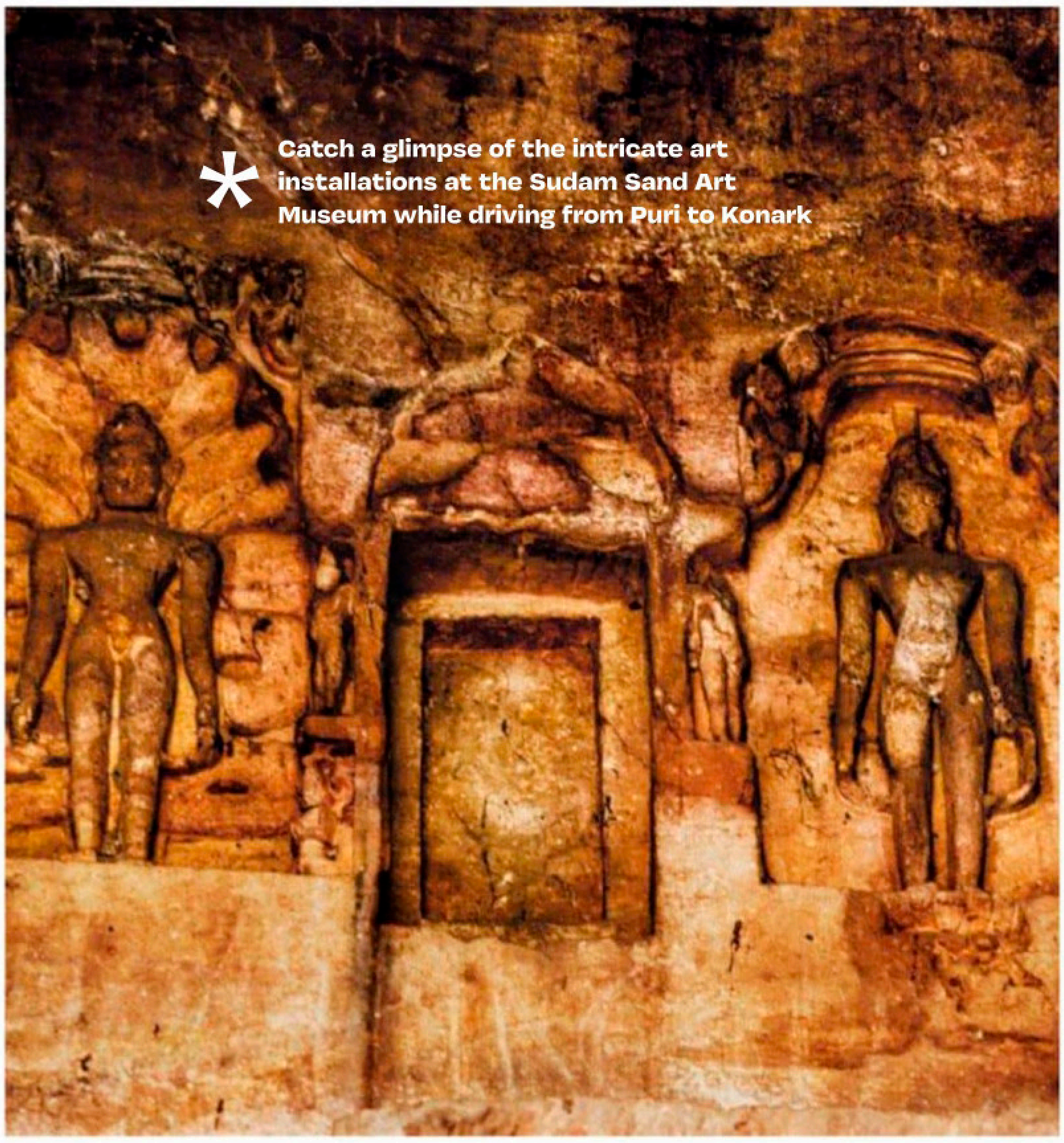
Uttarakhand

The state boasts of some of the most spectacular driving routes through the Himalaya

☒ EXERCISE EXTREME PATIENCE WHILE OUT IN THE WILD

The 95-kilometre drive from Nainital to Binsar through the gorgeous Himalaya is as breathtaking as it can get. The serene route offers an unparalleled view of gorges, waterfalls and sublime natural vistas. Escape into the Himalayan wildlife en route at the Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary in the remote, mighty mountains. An integral part of the Kumaon region, it boasts of 200 species of flora and fauna. Further along the treacherous valleys is the undiscovered, hauntingly beautiful, drive from Binsar to Pangot. Stop for a layover at Pangot's Kilbury Bird Sanctuary to spot innumerable rare migratory birds. The town's vast, lush expanse also includes several hiking trails and some beautiful rapids and streams. Drive through the terrain for about two hours to Ramnagar and treat your senses to an ethereal, natural escape at the Kaladhungi Waterfalls and the Jim Corbett wildlife circuit.

» The Kilbury Sanctuary is home to exotic bird species like white-throated thrushes, rufous-bellied woodpeckers and the striated prinia



* Catch a glimpse of the intricate art installations at the Sudam Sand Art Museum while driving from Puri to Konark

Odisha

The land of beaches and temples, Odisha is a treasure hidden in plain sight

☒ BE MINDFUL OF THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS AT THE TEMPLES

Embark on a journey and encounter India's bygone era at the Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves. These caves uncover India's ancient secrets in the form of carvings of royal scenes and hunting parties from Ashoka's reign. Drive further south and find yourself in the biggest salt water lagoon in Asia—Lake Chilika. You may even spot a dolphin during the sunset boat ride. The next leg of the leisure drive brings you to Puri. A soulful dip in the Bay of Bengal is sure to wipe away the city conundrum. Stroll through the town to sample some authentic and delectable Odia food. A drive along the shoreline will take you to Konark, where a guided tour of the Sun Temple is a must. Make sure to stop at the Olive Ridley Sea Turtle Reserve on the way. Drive to Bhitarkanika National Park, a RAMSAR site for its wetlands, and catch a glimpse of salt water crocodiles and rhesus monkeys.

» Visit the Jagannath Temple during dawn to get a crowd-free experience

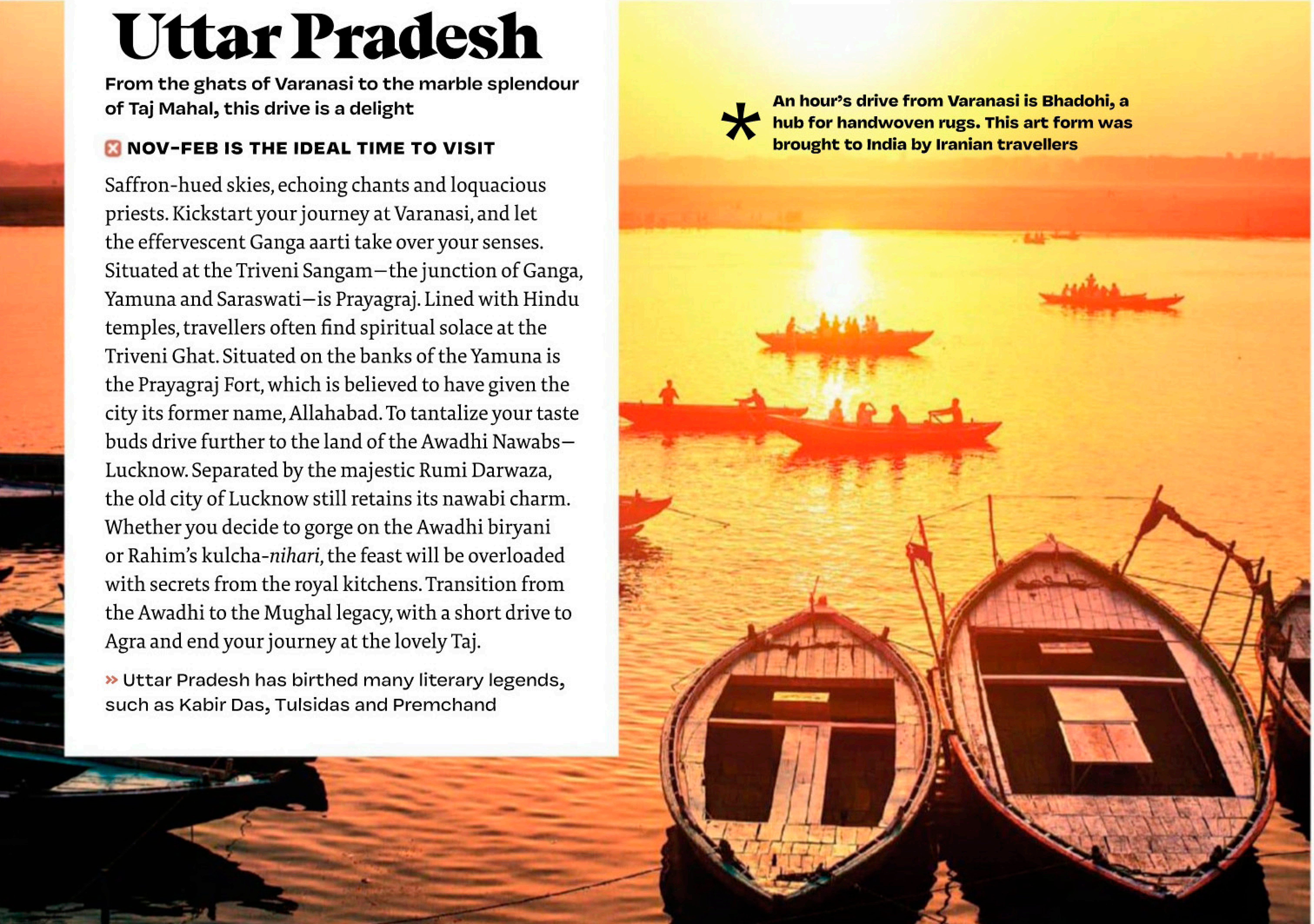
Uttar Pradesh

From the ghats of Varanasi to the marble splendour of Taj Mahal, this drive is a delight

☒ NOV-FEB IS THE IDEAL TIME TO VISIT

Saffron-hued skies, echoing chants and loquacious priests. Kickstart your journey at Varanasi, and let the effervescent Ganga aarti take over your senses. Situated at the Triveni Sangam—the junction of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati—is Prayagraj. Lined with Hindu temples, travellers often find spiritual solace at the Triveni Ghat. Situated on the banks of the Yamuna is the Prayagraj Fort, which is believed to have given the city its former name, Allahabad. To tantalize your taste buds drive further to the land of the Awadhi Nawabs—Lucknow. Separated by the majestic Rumi Darwaza, the old city of Lucknow still retains its nawabi charm. Whether you decide to gorge on the Awadhi biryani or Rahim's kulcha-*nihari*, the feast will be overloaded with secrets from the royal kitchens. Transition from the Awadhi to the Mughal legacy, with a short drive to Agra and end your journey at the lovely Taj.

» Uttar Pradesh has birthed many literary legends, such as Kabir Das, Tulsidas and Premchand



* An hour's drive from Varanasi is Bhadohi, a hub for handwoven rugs. This art form was brought to India by Iranian travellers

* Rajasthan's capital city, Jaipur, was founded in 1727 by Jai Singh II, who was also the ruler of Amer

Rajasthan

Drive through the land of kings and witness their fortified grandeur

BEST TIME TO VISIT RAJASTHAN IS WINTERS

A 13-kilometre drive from the Pink City to the majestic Amer fort for an evening of cultural rendition of history and folk legends is a sublime way to kickstart your Rajasthan trip. If you fancy yourself an unconventional traveller, then head to Shekhawati, a major ancient caravan trade route. People often find themselves lost in the royal musings within the havelis that are filled with elaborate frescos, intricate jali carvings and legacies. Drive along to Pushkar—one of the oldest cities in India—to indulge in timeless architectural heritage, temple trails and mythology. Follow the next leg of the drive to Kumbhalgarh Fort and witness India's very own great wall, built to ward off the invading Mughal armies. An alternate route to experience the magnificent desert state is beginning your journey from Churu, a gateway to the mighty Thar. Drive further along and find yourself in Bikaner, the city of dunes and gorgeous sunsets. Retreat while in Jaisalmer, where the fort awaits you with its countless secrets.

» Check the timings of the light and sound show at Amer Fort, as they may differ with the seasons

The Oscar-winning filmmaker Satyajit Ray shot his first children's film, the iconic *Sonar Kella*, at the Jaisalmer Fort.

Madhya Pradesh

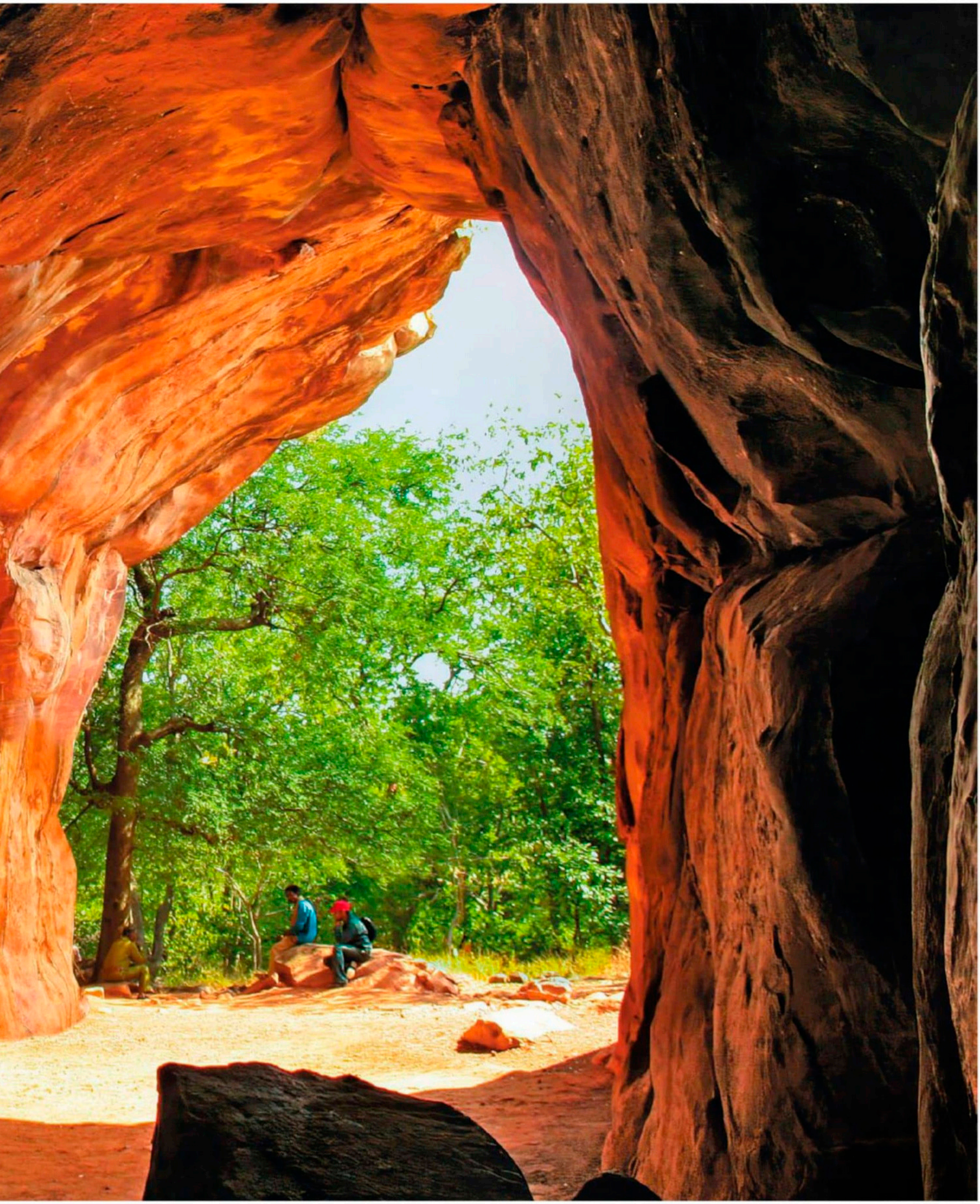
Culture, history and wildlife thrive hand-in-hand here

☒ OCT-MAR IS THE IDEAL TIME TO VISIT

Get a wild start to your journey at the Bandhavgarh National Park with an open-jeep safari. Many might say you're lucky if you spot a tiger, but we place our bets on the leopards and jackals. A 4-hour-drive from here will take you to Bhedaghat, where myriad layers of spirituality and mythology unfold at the Chausath Yogini Temple dedicated to goddess Durga. For the intrepid traveller, the Dhuandhar Falls is also a sight to behold as the waters of the Narmada River cascade down from an altitude giving rise to a daunting mist. If your personal travel style edges towards serenity, a boat ride on the Narmada River is our pick. A further drive paves way for a Unesco Biosphere Reserve famed for its flora and fauna, Pachmarhi. Enter the last leg of your journey at Bhimbetka where the rock shelter cave paintings, a Unesco World Heritage Site, transport you 12,000 years back in time.

» Bandhavgarh remains closed during the monsoons and reopens in October

*** The food preferences here change every few kilometres. Make sure to treat your taste buds to all local delicacies**



If you find some extra time on your hands, drive through the Western Ghat roads and witness the majestic Dudhsagar Falls.

Goa

Drive past the jaunty beach shacks to discover Goa like never before

☒ IDEAL TIME TO VISIT IS NOV–FEB

For those who equate Goa with booze and parties, beginning your drive the traditional way at Palolem is a promising start. With long stretches of powdery sand beaches flanked by coconut palms and beach huts, Palolem is synonymous with leisure. Leave the waves on a high and head to the Cabo de Rama fort. The view atop this forgotten gem transports you back to Goa's yesteryears. Ride to Margao and get a taste of the local life. Further along north, find yourself amid architecturally abundant churches and cathedrals left behind by the Portuguese. Drive past them to reach Panjim and take a walk around this charming town. If walking is not your thing, take a cycling tour here and roam freely between the beaches, some more churches, and colourful streets. Re-energise and drive on to the charismatic Aguada fort. Sit on its fortifications before starting an exploratory trail of the beaches that lie ahead. Cover Candolim, Calangute, Baga, Anjuna, and Vagator one by one, and camp at your preferred one, each more astounding than the other.

» Visit the Noronha's Corner Food Truck in Anjuna for a true Goan feast

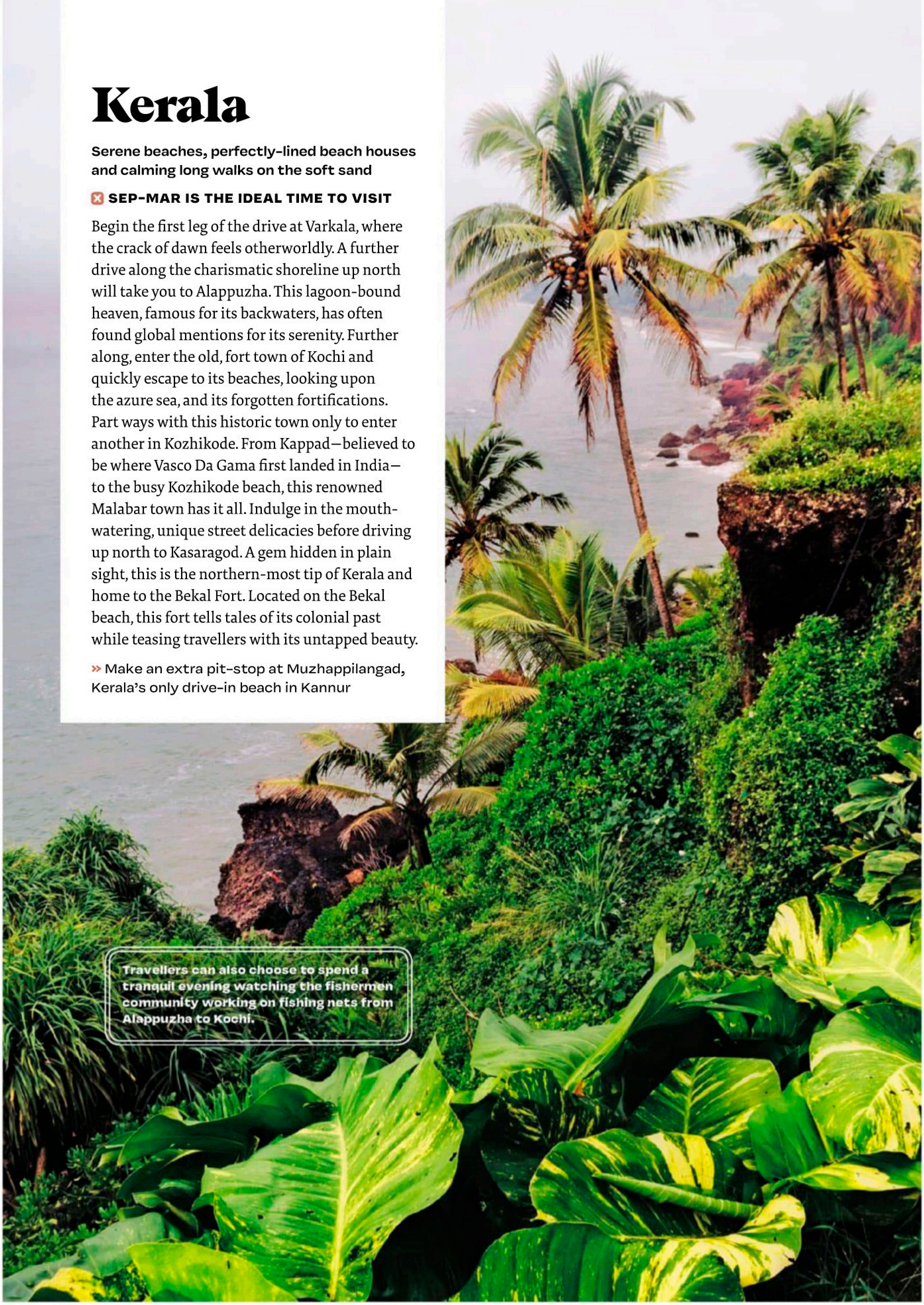
Kerala

Serene beaches, perfectly-lined beach houses and calming long walks on the soft sand

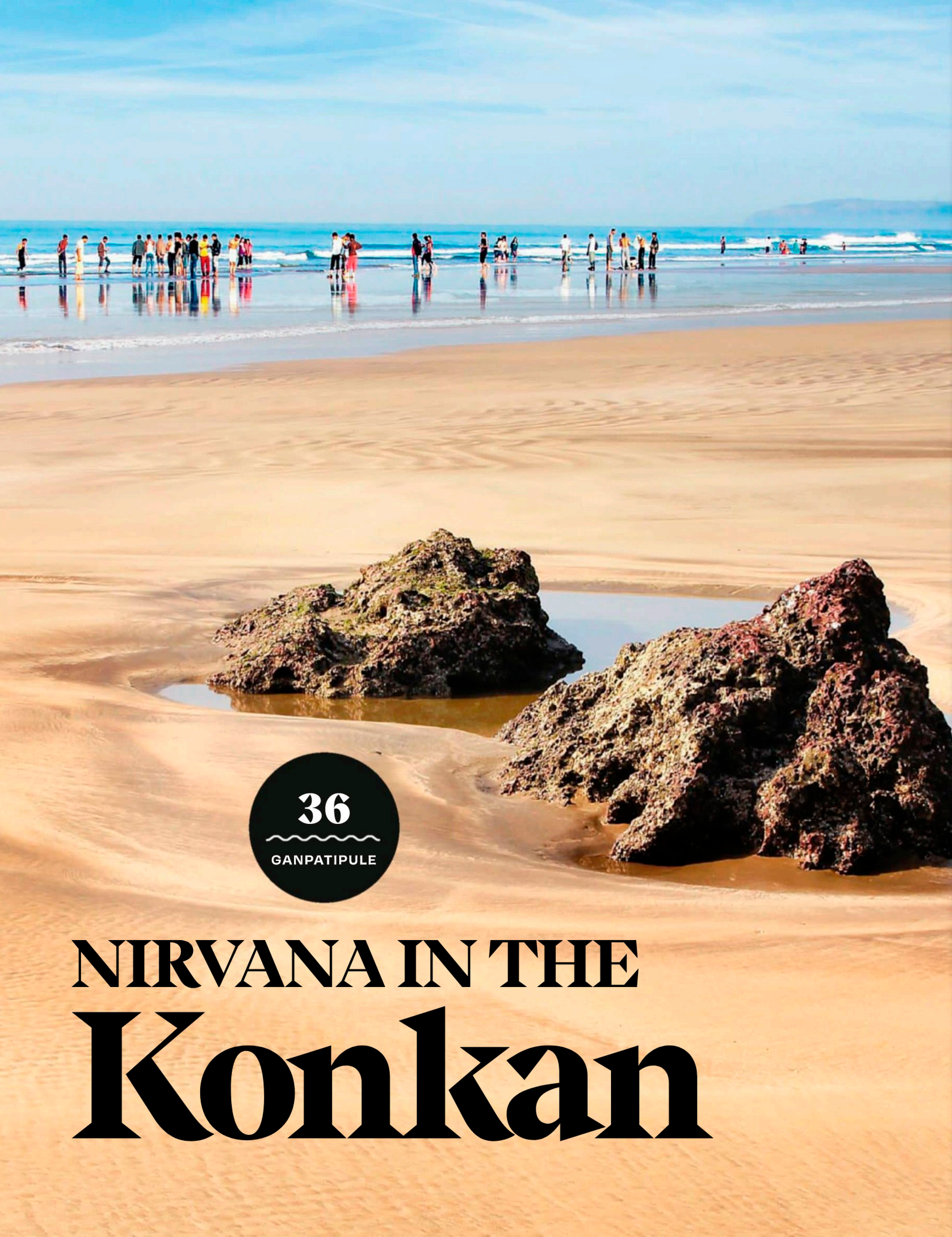
☒ SEP-MAR IS THE IDEAL TIME TO VISIT

Begin the first leg of the drive at Varkala, where the crack of dawn feels otherworldly. A further drive along the charismatic shoreline up north will take you to Alappuzha. This lagoon-bound heaven, famous for its backwaters, has often found global mentions for its serenity. Further along, enter the old, fort town of Kochi and quickly escape to its beaches, looking upon the azure sea, and its forgotten fortifications. Part ways with this historic town only to enter another in Kozhikode. From Kappad—believed to be where Vasco Da Gama first landed in India—to the busy Kozhikode beach, this renowned Malabar town has it all. Indulge in the mouth-watering, unique street delicacies before driving up north to Kasaragod. A gem hidden in plain sight, this is the northern-most tip of Kerala and home to the Bekal Fort. Located on the Bekal beach, this fort tells tales of its colonial past while teasing travellers with its untapped beauty.

» Make an extra pit-stop at Muzhappilangad, Kerala's only drive-in beach in Kannur



Travellers can also choose to spend a tranquil evening watching the fishermen community working on fishing nets from Alappuzha to Kochi.



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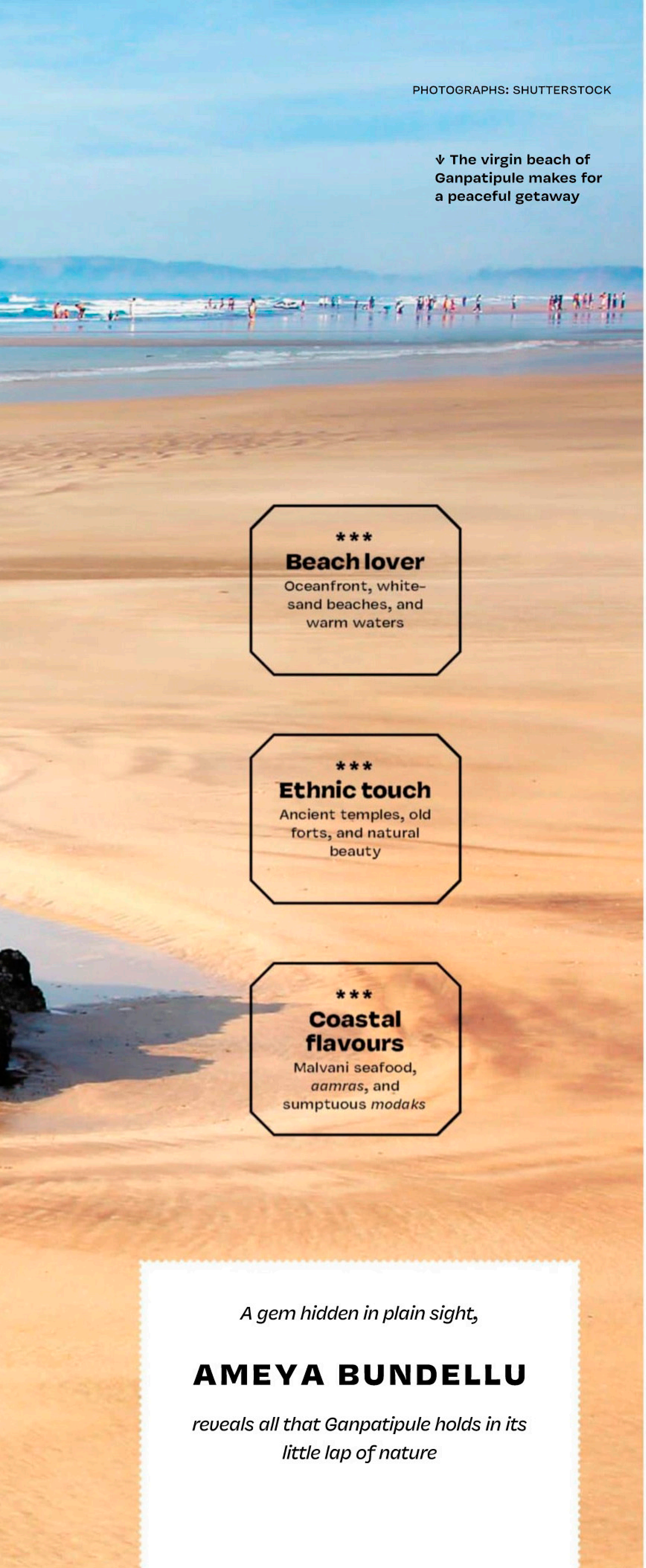
GANPATIPULE

NIRVANA IN THE Konkan



PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

↓ The virgin beach of Ganpatipule makes for a peaceful getaway

* * *

Beach lover

Oceanfront, white-sand beaches, and warm waters

* * *

Ethnic touch

Ancient temples, old forts, and natural beauty

* * *

Coastal flavours

Malvani seafood, *aamras*, and sumptuous *modaks*

A gem hidden in plain sight,

AMEYA BUNDELLU

reveals all that Ganpatipule holds in its little lap of nature

T

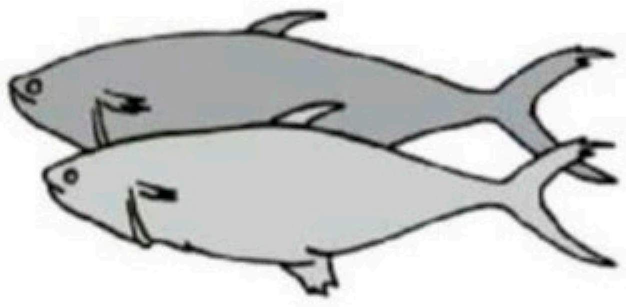
THEY SAY THE POWDERY WHITE SAND HERE GLOWS AT NIGHT

And changes hues at sunset. Though the few beaches around Ganpatipule cannot be compared to the serene backwaters that Kerala offers, they still continue to remain one of the crown jewels of Maharashtra and one of the state's most famous images. Precisely the reason why this less-explored destination (I prefer to call it less explored because it almost never makes it to the list while planning a beach holiday, with more known options like Alibaug and Goa always vying for the top spot) deserves to be seen and experienced. In the current scenario, where international travel seems a long way off and exploring destinations closer home is the most plausible option, a getaway to this coastal town is ideal for someone craving for that one quick weekend escape.

Once used to transport coconuts and spices, this sleepy town is known for its flavorful cuisine and warm hospitality today. Dotting the Konkan coastline, nearly 25 kilometres from Ratnagiri and situated towards the southern end of Maharashtra, it has ample potential to grow into a major tourist magnet of sorts. For what it probably lacks in sophistication, it more than makes up for it in its spectacular white sand beaches, archaeological marvels and tropical climate. Taking a plunge in the warm waters here and enjoying a cocktail is simply the perfect antidote to a hot sultry afternoon.

To savour authentic coastal seafood, especially the day's fresh catch, do not forget to dine at Sameer, considered the city's best.

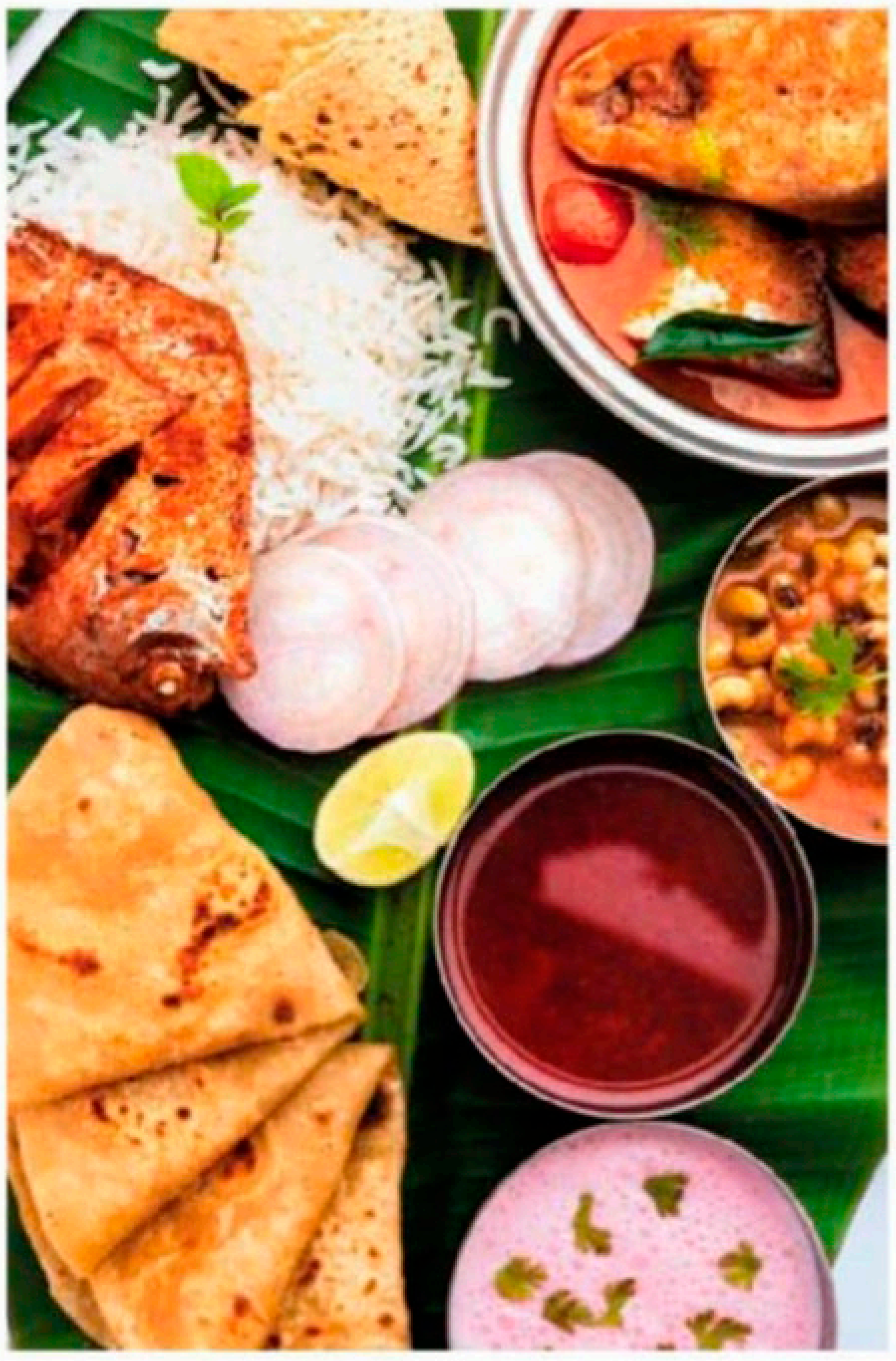
Seafood lovers are in for a treat and can relish a variety of fish thalis served at the local eateries. Diners from all walks of life flock to these no-frills joints to savour the lip-smacking *surmai* (king fish) and prawn thali.



WHILE NO ONE IS quite sure

How tourists stumbled upon Ganpatipule, Maharashtrian and Gujarati families from Mumbai and Pune have frequently been visiting Ratnagiri, and especially Ganpatipule for over a few centuries for the famed Swayambhu Ganpati Temple, believed to be around 400 years old. Two beautiful idols of Lord Ganesha can be found here, one made out of white sand and the other made of bronze. With a hill in its immediate background that resembles Lord Ganesha, most visitors make it a point to circumambulate the hillock as a mark of respect to the deity.

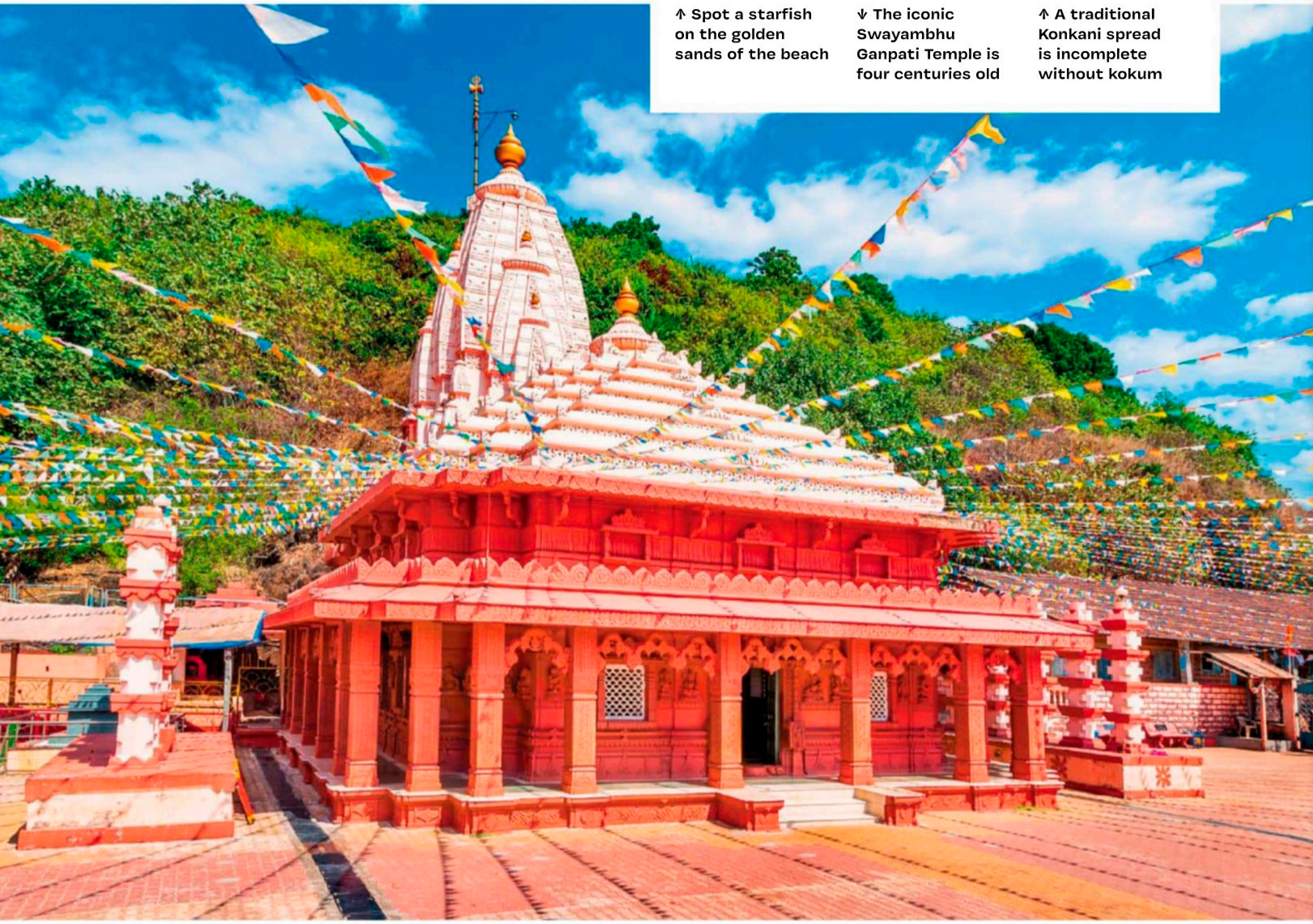
Though the place hasn't changed significantly over the years, it was only



↑ Spot a starfish on the golden sands of the beach

↓ The iconic Swayambhu Ganpati Temple is four centuries old

↑ A traditional Konkani spread is incomplete without kokum



a matter of time until tourists started flocking the town for its dazzling beaches and the growing number of upscale hotels and homestays. I checked into the eco-chic Blue Ocean Resort & Spa. With rooms that boast of contemporary decor and elegant artworks that adorn the walls, the beach-front villas and sea views could stop the most world-weary traveller in their tracks. Set in lush greenery opposite the crescent-shaped Malgund Beach, across Arrey Warrey Road and against the backdrop of coconut palms, the property has an idyllic setting. Enjoy the fine spa or laze around the pool side, basking in the shade. A few old traditional houses of Ganpatipule have also been converted into homestays including a number of charming waterfront cottages.

Travellers with modest budgets have long flocked here. However, Ganpatipule over the last few years has also caught the eye of vacationers with deep pockets. And while it may now seem like a versatile slice of holiday heaven with luxury villas, wellness retreats and laidback homestays, what stands out is the fact that it has still managed to retain its original ethnic and cultural vibe.

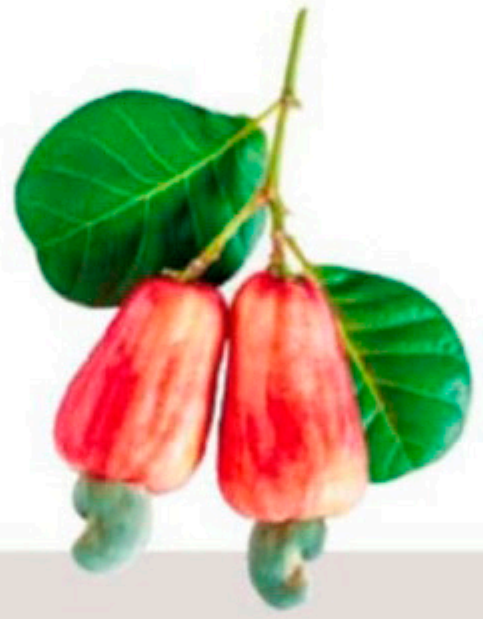
> The beach town of Velneshwar is approx. 40kms away from Ganpatipule. The crescent-shaped beach with a shrine to Lord Shiva is worth visiting.

THERE IS NO greater love

Than the love of food. Delve deep into one of Maharashtra's most distinct coastal food cultures at Ganpatipule. Discerning locals can be seen haggling for the freshest produce and seafare at the local market. For a wholesome Maharashtrian vegetarian thali complete with *aamras* (seasonal) and *ukadiche modak* it doesn't get any better than Mehendale's Swaad Dining.

Honestly, it is the calmness of everyday life—witnessing fishermen in their traditional longboats, children splashing offshore, fishing birds of a certain species—that makes it hard to imagine a better setting to rejuvenate one's body and soul.

traveller GANPATIPULE



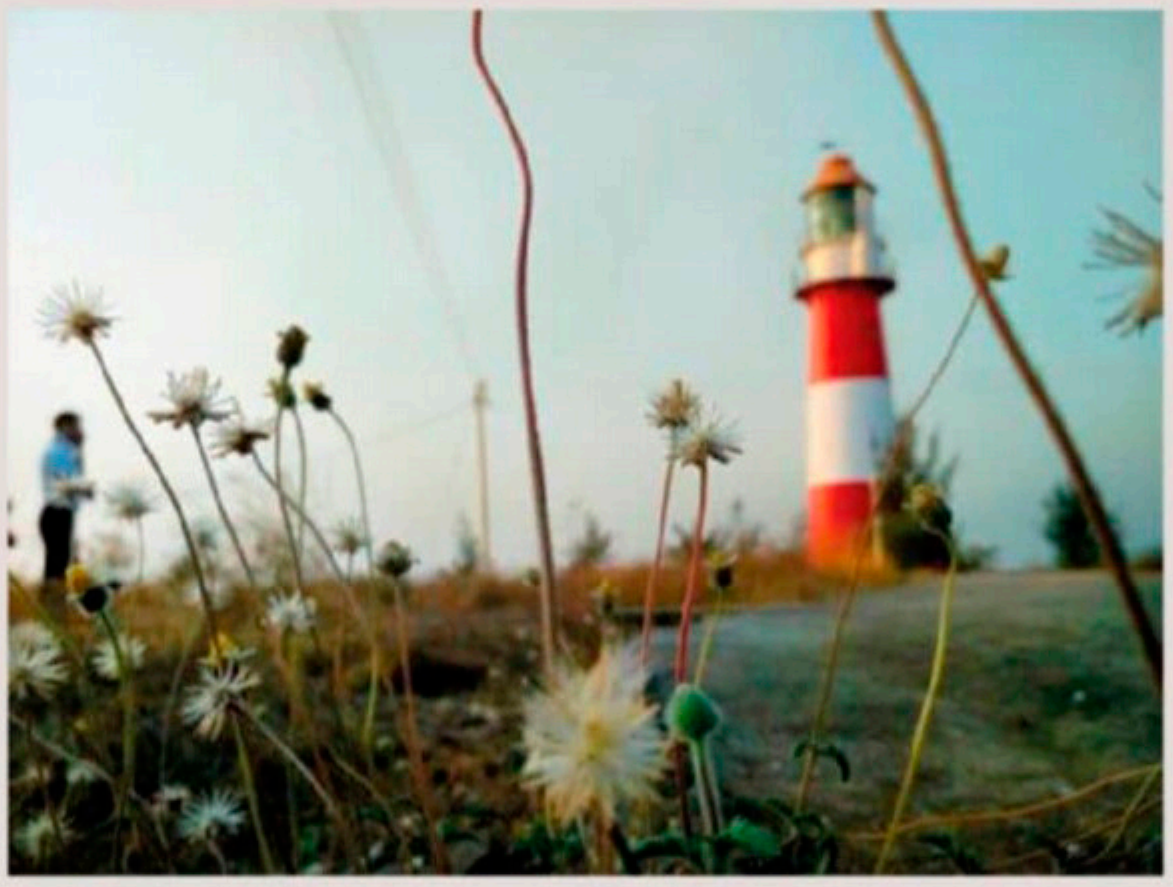
Nearest Airport: Mumbai (317kms, 10 hours to Malgund)

Drive From Mumbai to Ganpatipule; halt at Chiplun for its sandy beaches, mangroves and cashew plantations

Getting Around

- ☒ Rickshaws and taxis are easily available, however, tourists prefer self or chauffeur-driven cars
- ☒ Motorcycles and bicycles are also available for rent

Around the Town



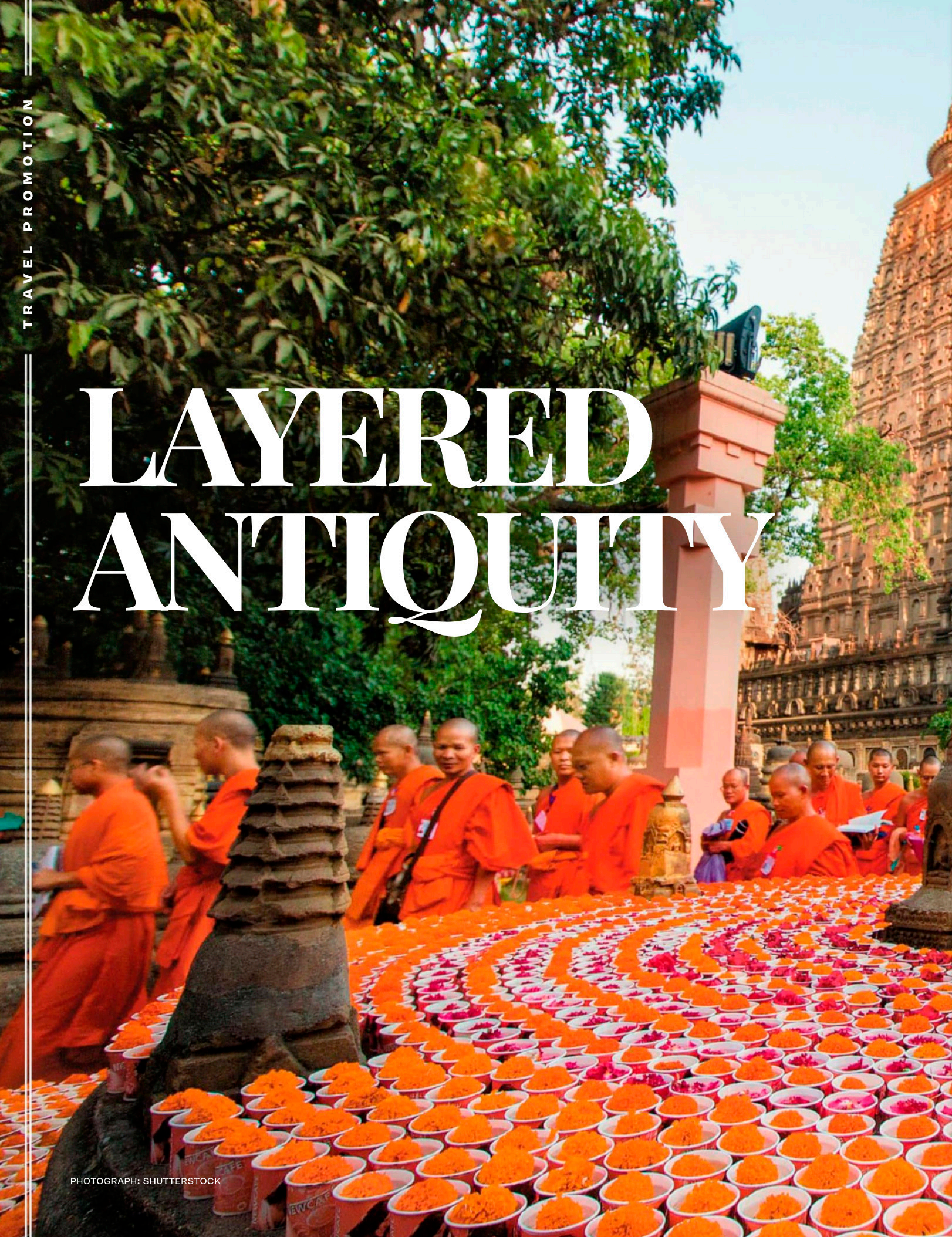
- ☒ **Jaigad Fort** Coastal fortification protected under the Archaeological Survey of India
- ☒ **Lighthouse** Located atop the peninsular tip, the lighthouse dates back nearly two centuries
- ☒ **Beach Hopping** Drive along Guhagar Beach, Malgund Beach and Bhandarpule Beach
- ☒ **Nivali Waterfalls** 45mins drive from Ganpatipule

Do not miss

Alphonso mangoes of the Devgad variety, cashew nuts, kokum sherbet and local mango pickle

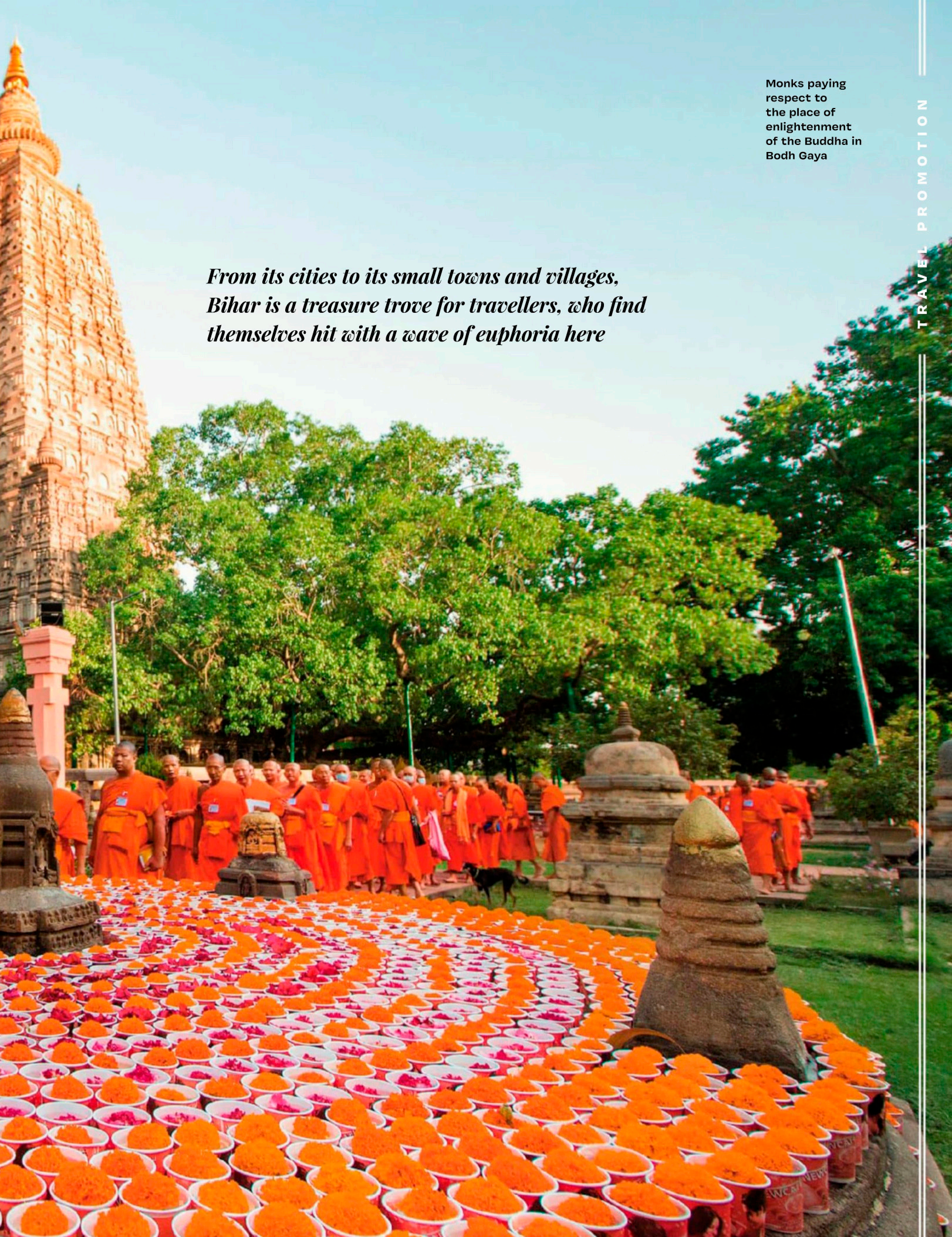
What to Eat

- ☒ Traditional fish thali includes the fresh catch of the day (pomfret or mackerel—fried or made into a spicy curry), multigrain *bhakri*, *sol kadi* and rice
- ☒ Wholesome Maharashtrian vegetarian thali comprises of puri, *aamras* (seasonal), kokum curry and steamed *modaks*



LAYERED ANTIQUITY

PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK



From its cities to its small towns and villages, Bihar is a treasure trove for travellers, who find themselves hit with a wave of euphoria here

Monks paying respect to the place of enlightenment of the Buddha in Bodh Gaya

Located to the east of the country, Bihar is one of the most exciting and alluring destinations with a tranquil aura to it. The culture and ancient sites here tell tales of the state, which come alive on its busy streets. Renowned for its fascinating festivals of colours and deep-rooted customs and values, this state is a treat that has been hiding in plain sight. Bihar's long and rich history dates back centuries—the former kingdom of Magadha and home to multiple dynasties, like the Mauryas and the Guptas. To ensure the safety of travellers, the state government has also issued stringent precautionary measures. Step foot into blissful Bihar and wonder why it is often overlooked.

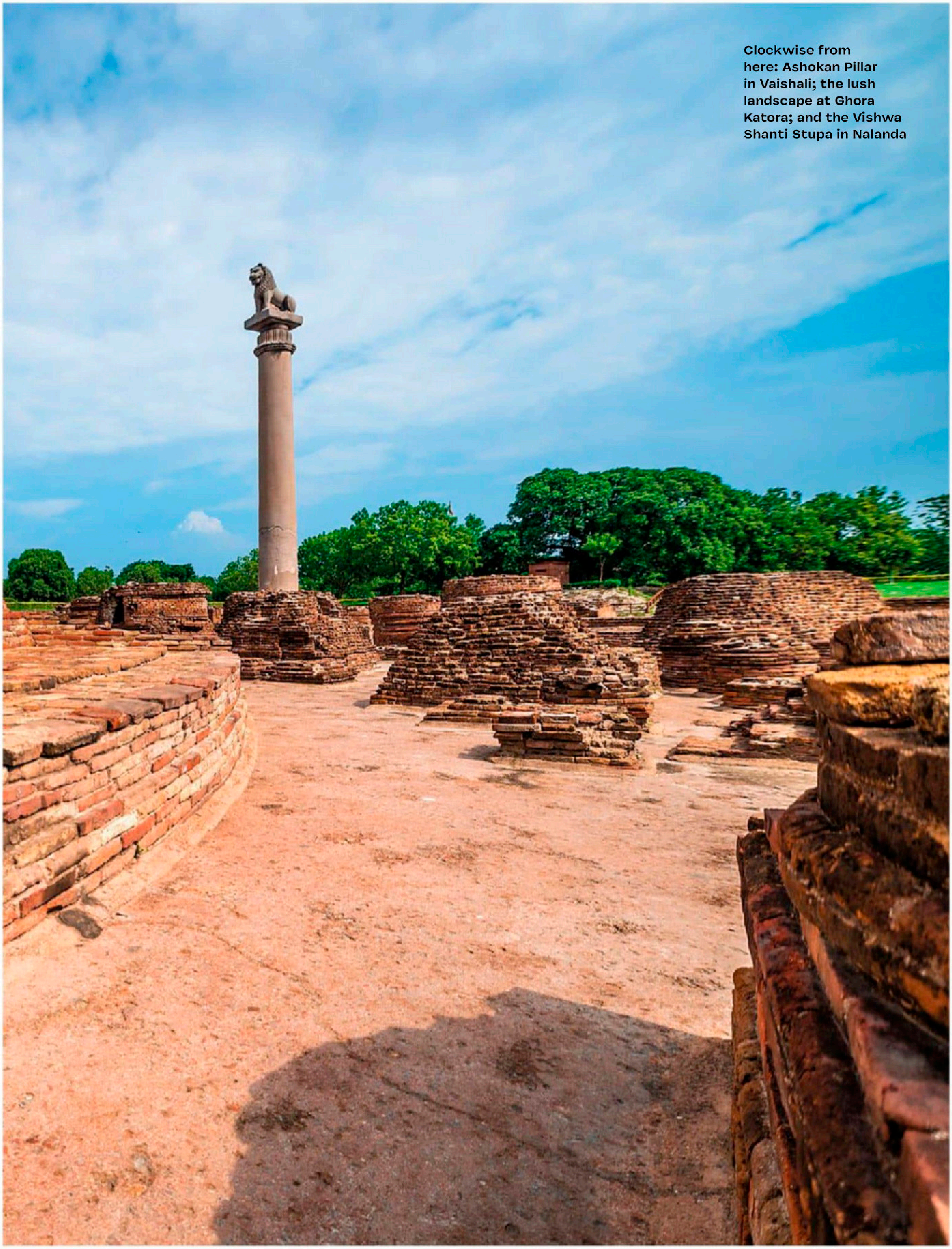
On a Spiritual Trail

The antiquity of this ancient land where India's first major empires rose and fell is evident from its name, derived from the ancient word 'Vihara'.

Located about 90kms southeast of the capital Patna, is Rajgir. Originally known as Rajagriha—translating to 'home of the king'—it was initially the ancient capital of the city of Magadh. It was in Rajgir that Gautam Buddha spent several months meditating and preaching, and Lord Mahavira spent 14 years of his life at a single place during four monsoon months. Home to rock-cut caves, forts, Buddhist ruins, shell inscriptions, Hindu and Jain temples, and Muslim tombs, it speaks the language of the soul of Bihar.

Further along in the Nalanda district,

Bihar's capital Patna—formerly Patliputra—is one of the oldest continuously inhabited places, not only in India but the world.



Clockwise from here: Ashokan Pillar in Vaishali; the lush landscape at Ghora Katora; and the Vishwa Shanti Stupa in Nalanda is one of the greatest centres of learning in ancient times. This small village in the Buddhist circuit is as serene as ancient times. The ruins of Nalanda University, constructed in the Kushana style of architecture, can also be found here.

It is in Nalanda that the pristine, marbled Vishwa Shanti Stupa, or the World Peace Pagoda, atop the Ratnagiri Hill resides. Although the climb uphill may seem daunting, the views continue to amaze travellers from all walks of life. The four golden Buddha statues—depicting his birth, enlightenment, preaching and death—are flocked by the followers of Buddhism and Jainism alike. Additionally, there is also a ropeway that can take travellers uphill. This pilgrimage trail also leads one to Bodh Gaya. Dotted with temples and monasteries, this 2,500-year-old birthplace of Buddhism lets you retrace the footsteps of Lord Buddha and his path to nirvana. Soaked in saffron and maroon robes, the chants and prayers of the monks here build a cocoon of peace.

The Heritage Arch

Toss the two-headed coin and heritage is bound to follow history. Bihar is believed to be the only state with a history of over 3,000 years and rightly so. The presence of numerous ancient architectural relics represents the rich heritage of the state. Forts, caves, and tombs are

Clockwise from here: the pristine Jalmandir; Sher Shah Suri's tomb at Sasaram; the Barabar caves; and the Navlakha Palace

PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK

ASHISH KAUSHIK

At that time, Nalanda University was the only international university. When burned, its library was on fire for over five months due to the number of books.

regular topographical features here with occasional heaps of forgotten ruins. History rings loud in each sight in Bihar and travellers must follow its sound.

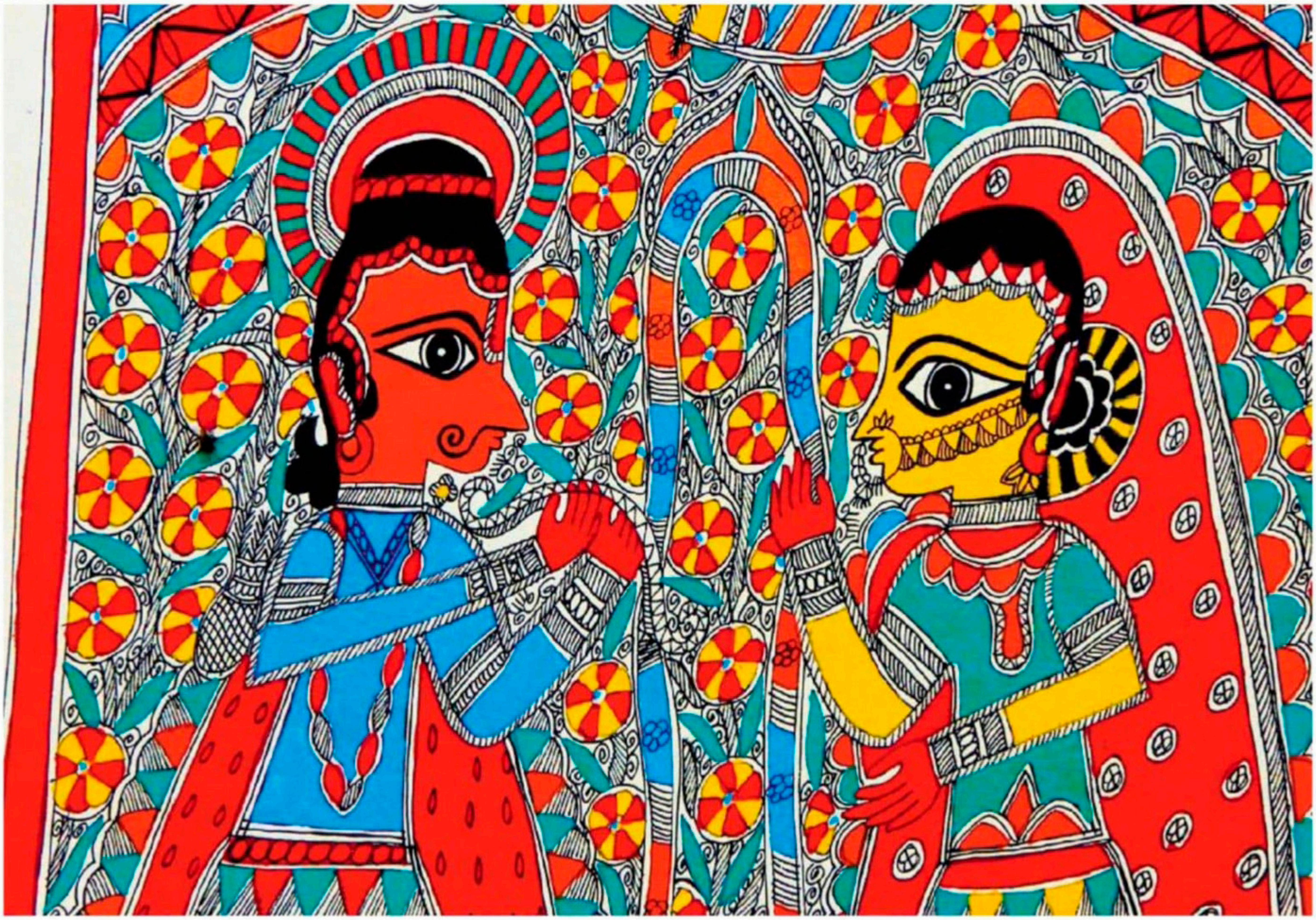
Bihar's delightful and longstanding relationship with history and heritage can be found at Kumhrar, where the remains of the ancient Patliputra were excavated. Ancient ruins here, along with relics also include an 80-pillared assembly hall. The site is a testimony to the state's cultural abundance. Patliputra boasts of a glorious path and the ruins at Kumhrar today bear testimony to the fact. Excavations over the years have been a delight for the lovers of archaeology.

Move on to the religious town of Buxar, also known as Vishwamitra Nagari, along the banks of river Ganga. The most noteworthy sight is clearly the high standing Buxar Fort, one of the ancient testaments erected by King Rudra Deo in 1054 AD

Further in Sasaram is an awe-worthy example of Indo-Islamic architecture at the tomb of Sher Shah Suri. The exquisite tomb is regarded as one of the noblest specimens of Afghan architecture in the country. The octagonal tomb, topped by a dome standing at the centre of a lake on a square stone plinth with domed kiosks, chhatris at each of its corners, with further stone banks, connected to the mainland through a wide stone bridge, is truly a work of wonder. The tomb of Hassan Shah and his son Salim Shah are some other architectural monuments of interest here.

As serenely surprising as Bihar is, the oldest surviving rock-cut caves in the country, located in the twin hills of Barabar and Nagarjuni hills, are an

PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK



A Madhubani painting; and (facing page) the Golghar in Patna

overwhelming sight. Created during the Maurya reign, they were dedicated to the Ajivaka Cult, later extensively used by monks belonging to this sect. Much like the state's various trails, the caves tell the history of their time along with the multiple cults and clans involved in their centuries of existence.

Birds have a different habitat altogether in the state at the Kanwar Lake Bird Sanctuary. One of the greenest parts in the region, it was established in 1987 to ensure the preservation of migratory birds. The Kanwar Lake is known to be the largest freshwater oxbow lake in Asia

Although the state speaks multiple languages depicting varied linguistic cultures, Bhojpuri is leading amid them.

Situated in the town of Rajnagar near Madhubani, is the Navlakha palace. Built in the 17th century AD by Maharaja Rameshwar Singh of Darbhangha, the palace neighbours the Kamala River that hosts a marble temple of goddess Kali. Another temple of goddess Durga forms an integral part of the palace and is still operational.

Moving on to Nalanda, the Jal Mandir—meaning water temple—also known as Apapuri, in Pawapuri—meaning a town without sins—makes a highly revered feature. The temple, dedicated to Lord Mahavira—the 24th Thirthankara (religious preacher of Jainism)—is nothing short of astonishing. It boasts of marvellous architecture and the integration of the various cultures of the state. Move on to the religious town of Buxar, also known as Vishwamitra Nagari, along the banks of river Ganga. The most noteworthy sight is clearly the high standing Buxar Fort, one of the ancient testaments erected by King Rudra Deo in 1054 AD.

The Wild Side

Bihar's fertile fields and green forests on the banks of the river Ganga host some of the wildest beasts in their habitats.

In the Terai region of the Shivalik Hills, spread over an area of 880 sq km, the Valmiki Tiger Reserve is home to tigers, leopards, flying foxes, flying squirrels, wild cats, langurs, sloth bears, antelopes, different species of birds and a variety of reptiles and butterflies. Travellers can indulge in safaris at the Valmiki Tiger Reserve at Rampur, or go trekking and birdwatching, or even pull off a full-moon visit, which is quite the experience.

On the other side, lies the Pant

Wildlife Sanctuary, also known as the Rajgir Wildlife Sanctuary, in Nalanda. With various illustrations and auspicious existence of hammocks from the Buddha and Jain era, this sanctuary is spread across 36 sq km and has some history in itself. Enriched with dense tropical forestry on the hills, the sanctuary hosts the likes of wild boars, nilgais, langurs, and pythons alongside species of large mammals, birds and reptiles, many of which are endangered.

For those looking to escape the city, Ghora Katora, a lush, nature-bound water reservoir near Rajgir is a serene escape. Situated amid mountains, it is frequented by the young and old alike. It is believed that the horses of the kings of Rajgir used to drink water here. What also makes this escape unique is the fact that fuelled vehicles are not allowed here, engulfing visitors with an air of tranquility.

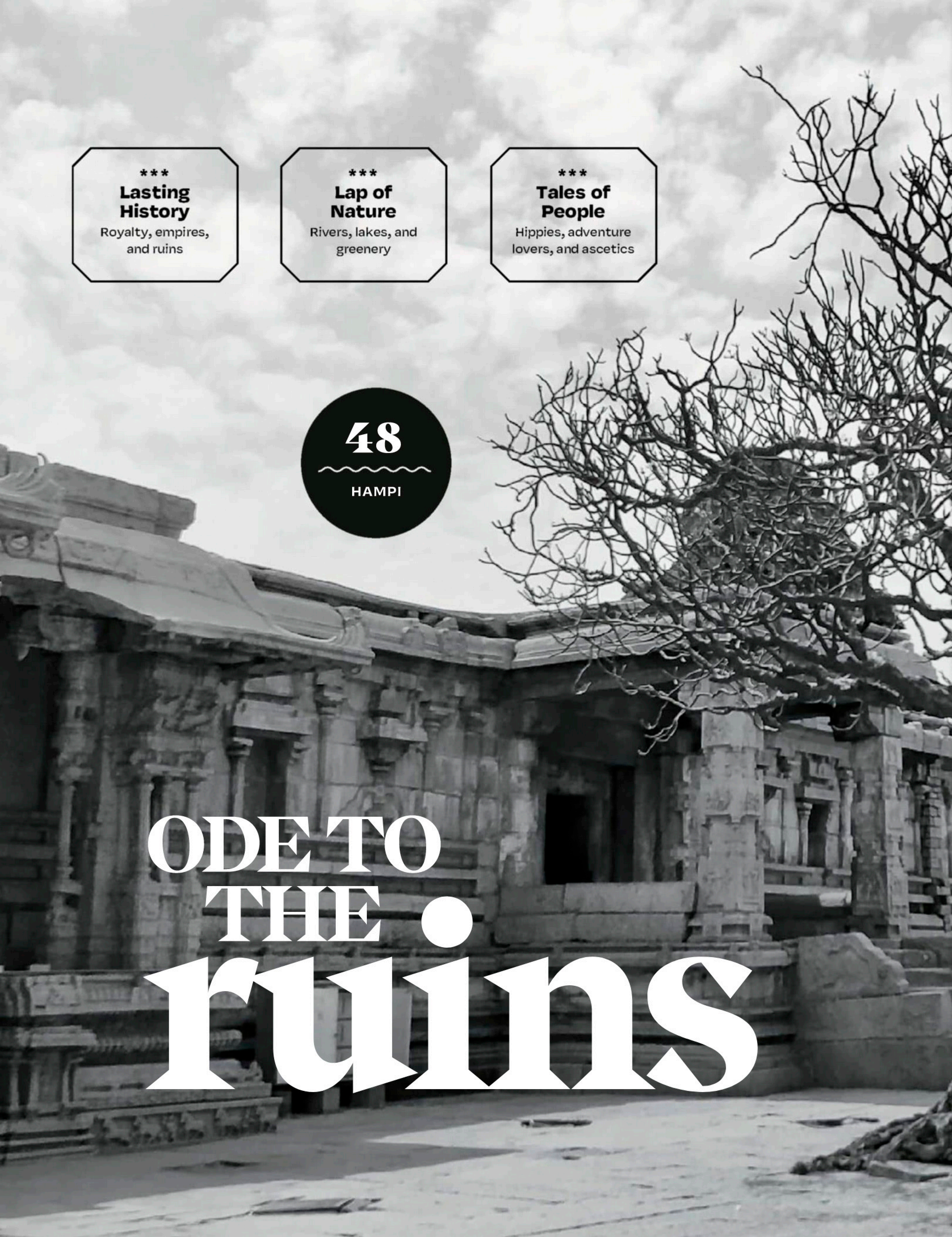
Birds have a different habitat altogether in the state at the Kanwar Lake Bird Sanctuary. One of the greenest parts in the region, it was established in 1987 to ensure the preservation of migratory birds. The Kanwar Lake is known to be the largest freshwater oxbow lake in Asia. It is home to settler bird varieties as well as migratory ones. Keep an eye on the ground here to find musk deer, leopards and black bears living in complete harmony.

The Mithila culture gained prominence as early as the Vedic period and is one of the oldest in the country.

Art and Culture

Bihar is as rich in culture, as it is in history and spirituality. Present in the region is the history of music including classical Hindustani and folk, along with dance forms such as Kathak and Khajri. Culture in Bihar is a celebration of a history dating back to the Vedic times. Delving into the world of art are Madhubani paintings, the most precious gift presented by the Mithila culture to the world. The Mithila culture of the Maithili speakers gives the true essence of cultural richness. Noted to wear a 'paag' as a symbol of honour and respect and a significant part of the culture, these people love their art. With initial references in the Hindu epic of Ramayana, the cultural significance of Madhubani paintings is beyond doubt one of the most pristine ones in the country. The paintings illustrated the thoughts, hopes, and dreams of the women who later began making them. Traditionally made on the base of plastered mud walls, they were later replaced by handmade paper, cloth, and canvas. Often characterised by complex geometrical patterns, these paintings are exemplary sights of Bihar's cultural history that one must explore.

BIHAR TOURISM
Blissful Bihar



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Lasting History
Royalty, empires, and ruins

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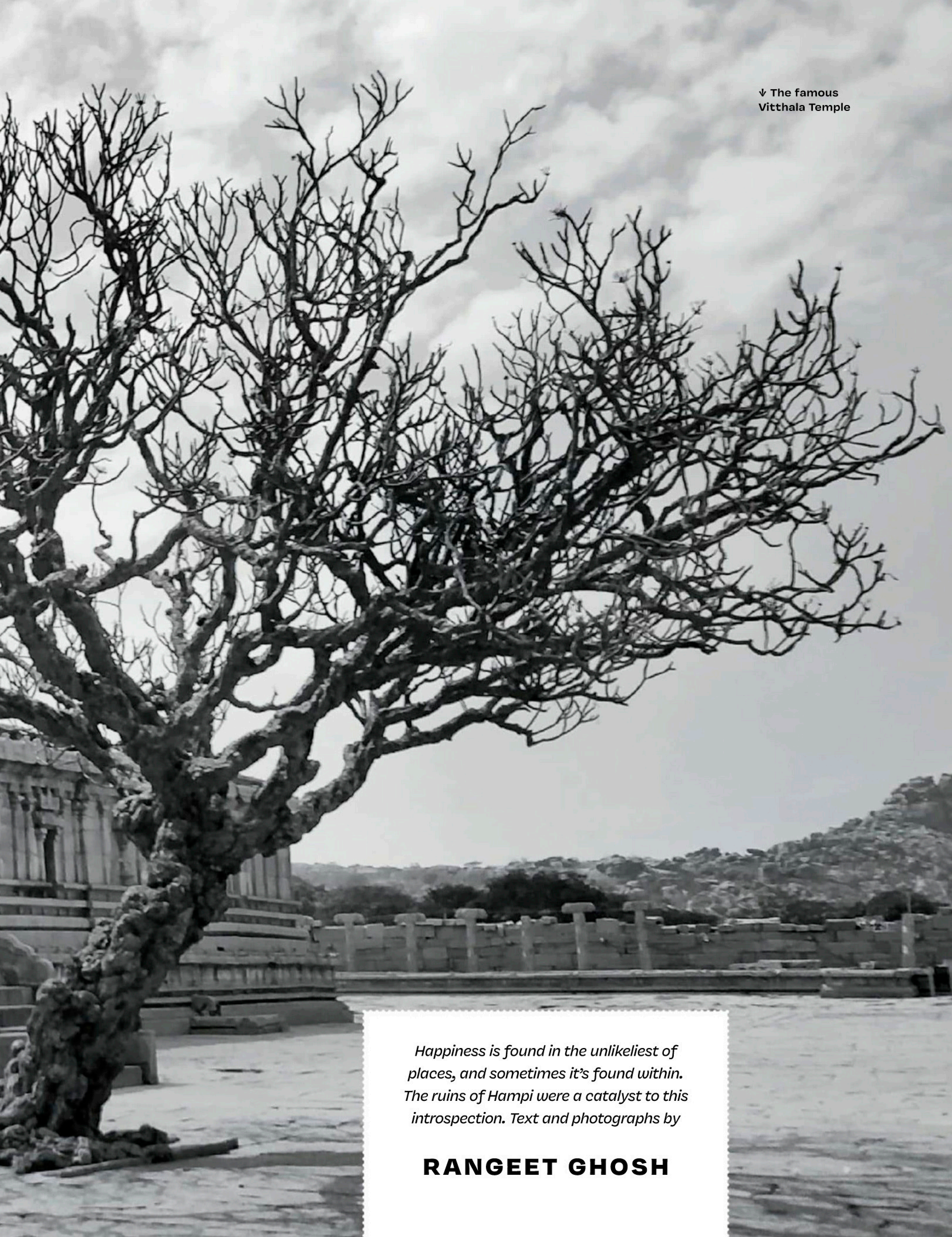
Lap of Nature
Rivers, lakes, and greenery

***
Tales of People
Hippies, adventure lovers, and ascetics

48

HAMPI

ODE TO THE ruins



↓ The famous Vitthala Temple

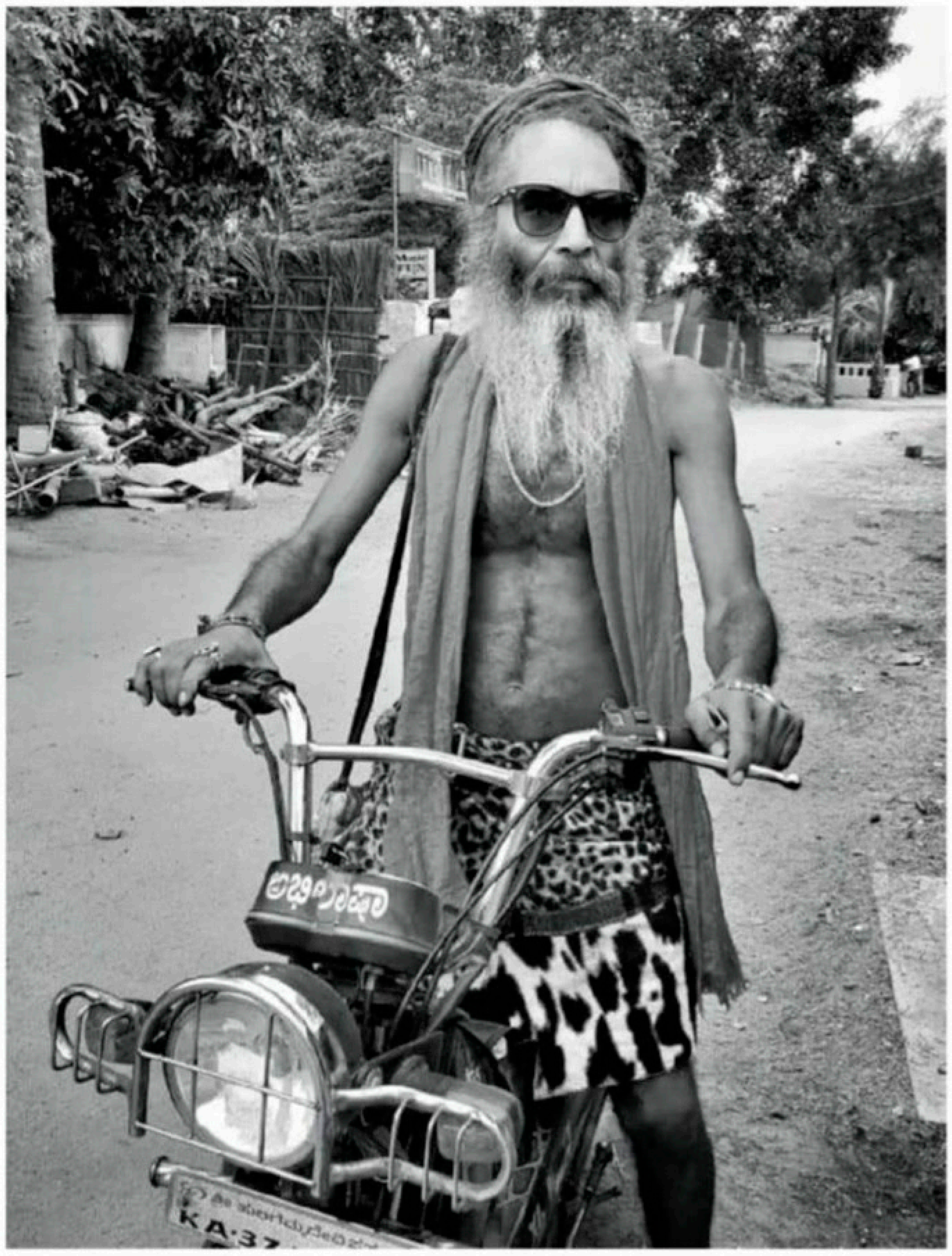
Happiness is found in the unlikeliest of places, and sometimes it's found within. The ruins of Hampi were a catalyst to this introspection. Text and photographs by

RANGEET GHOSH

I WILL NEVER FORGET KOSUKE. I met him on my wanderings through the capital of the old Vijayanagara empire—Hampi. Conquered, pillaged and destroyed, Hampi has stood the assaults of invading armies and time alike. Kosuke's story was much the same. A Japanese man, he quit his high-paying job, divorced his wife, and left his children to come to India in the pursuit of happiness. Along the way, he lost an arm, gained a pacemaker, learnt Hindi, and traversed the country doing odd jobs and singing about Shiva. He did, however, find his happiness.

But Kosuke wasn't the only person I met in Hampi. It was like a melting pot of cultures. Lungi-clad men and women with flowers in their hair; students and backpackers from different parts of the country, speaking in different accents of Hinglish; hashish-smoking hippies from all over the world; there was even a tiny community of Rajwada people, with their kurtas with dhoti and turbans, and long red ghagras with silver jewellery.

"DON'T WORRY," THEY SAID. "BE HAMPI." Zipping across the lonely roads on a rented scooter, meditating with sadhus, or marvelling at the architectural masterpieces of a civilisation long gone, Hampi was quite the celluloid dream. I spent my days exploring the temple complexes—from Vitthala to Virupaksha—or simply watching Laxmi, the resident elephant of the Virupaksha Temple taking a bath in the Tungabhadra River. I spent my nights down by the Sanapur Lake, gazing up at the starlit sky

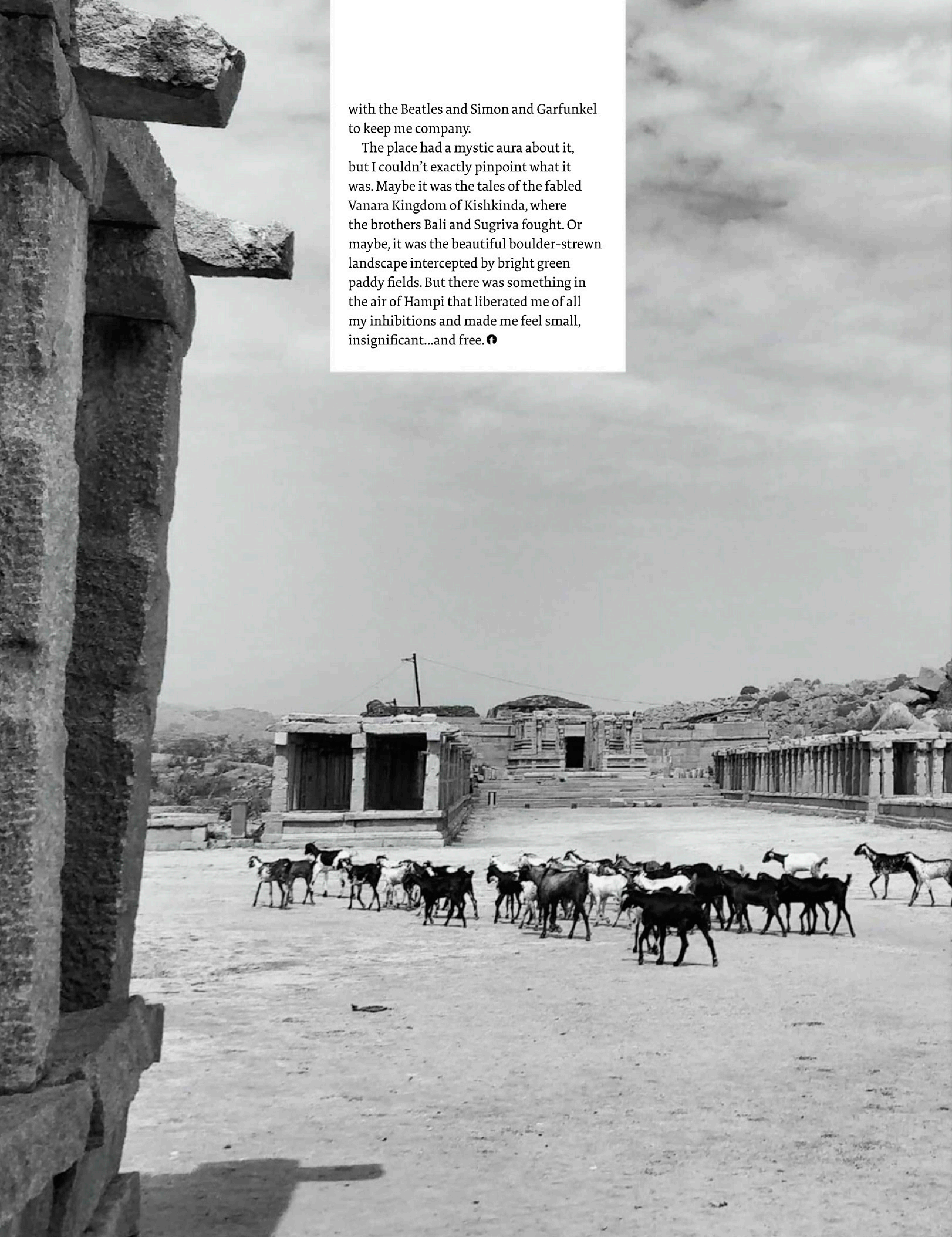


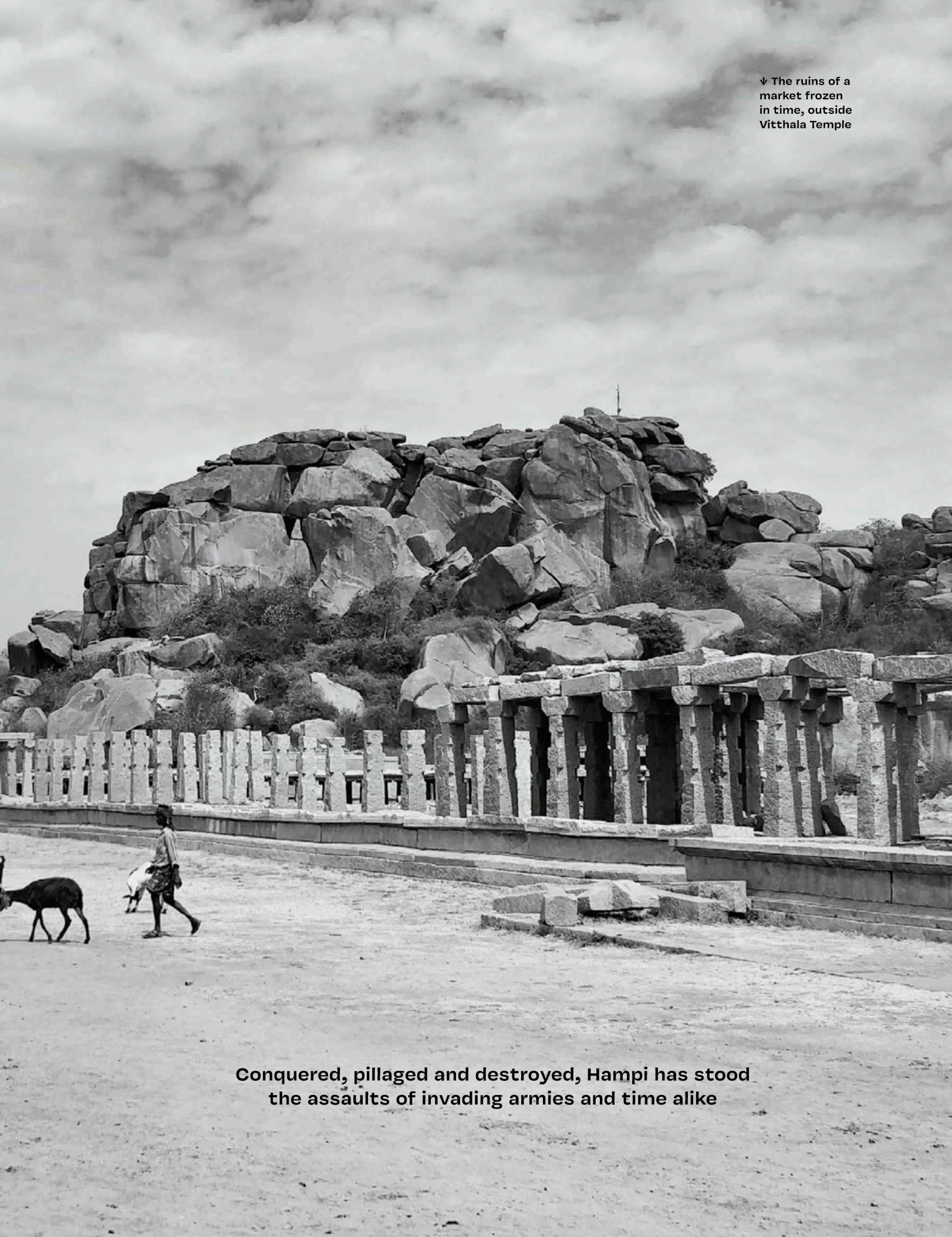
↑ A modern sadhu on a moped in his leopard-printed lungi

↓ A coracle ferrying passengers across the Tungabhadra

⇖ Ruins of the Lotus Temple in the Zenana Enclosure with the Beatles and Simon and Garfunkel to keep me company.

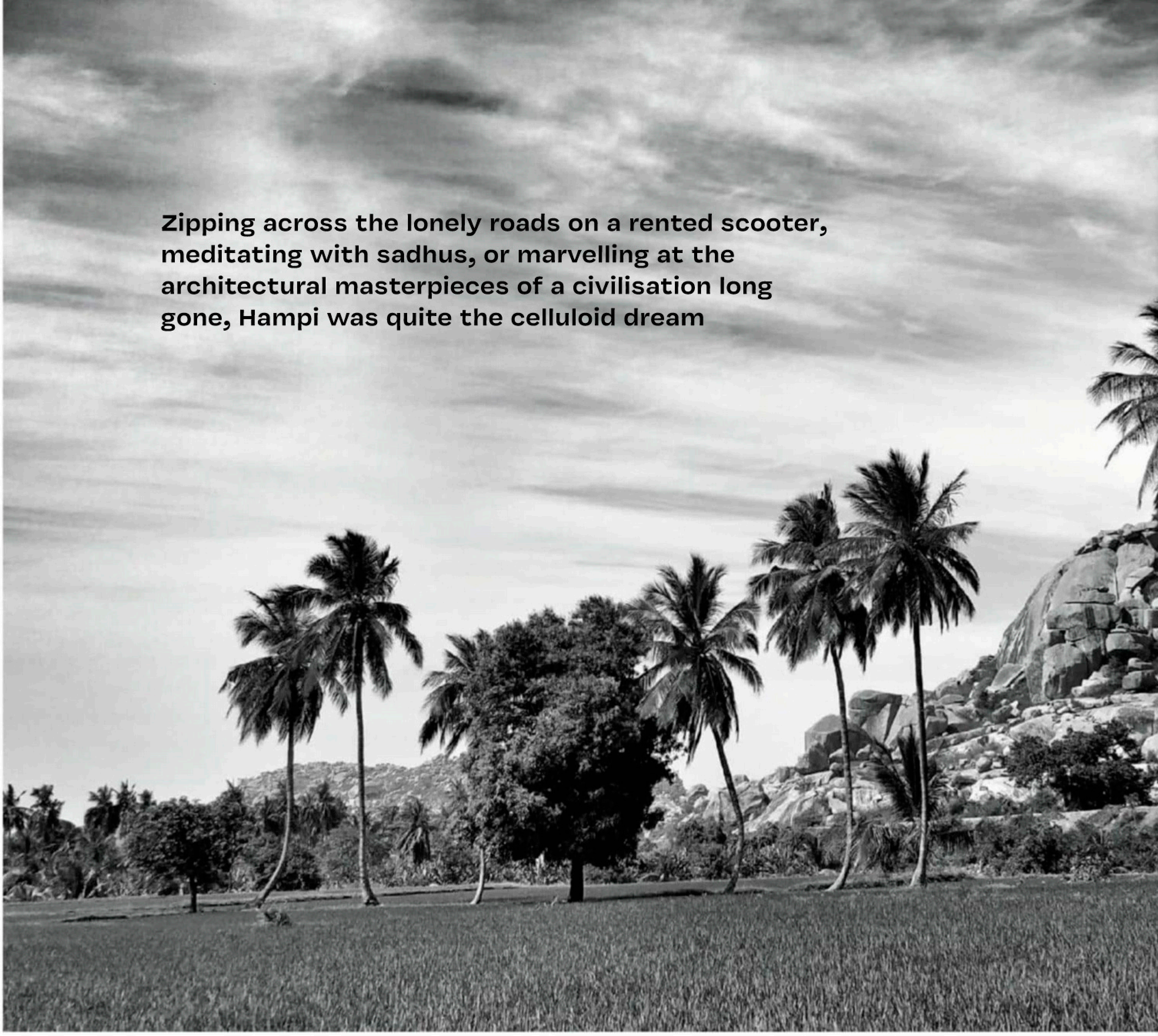
The place had a mystic aura about it, but I couldn't exactly pinpoint what it was. Maybe it was the tales of the fabled Vanara Kingdom of Kishkinda, where the brothers Bali and Sugriva fought. Or maybe, it was the beautiful boulder-strewn landscape intercepted by bright green paddy fields. But there was something in the air of Hampi that liberated me of all my inhibitions and made me feel small, insignificant...and free.



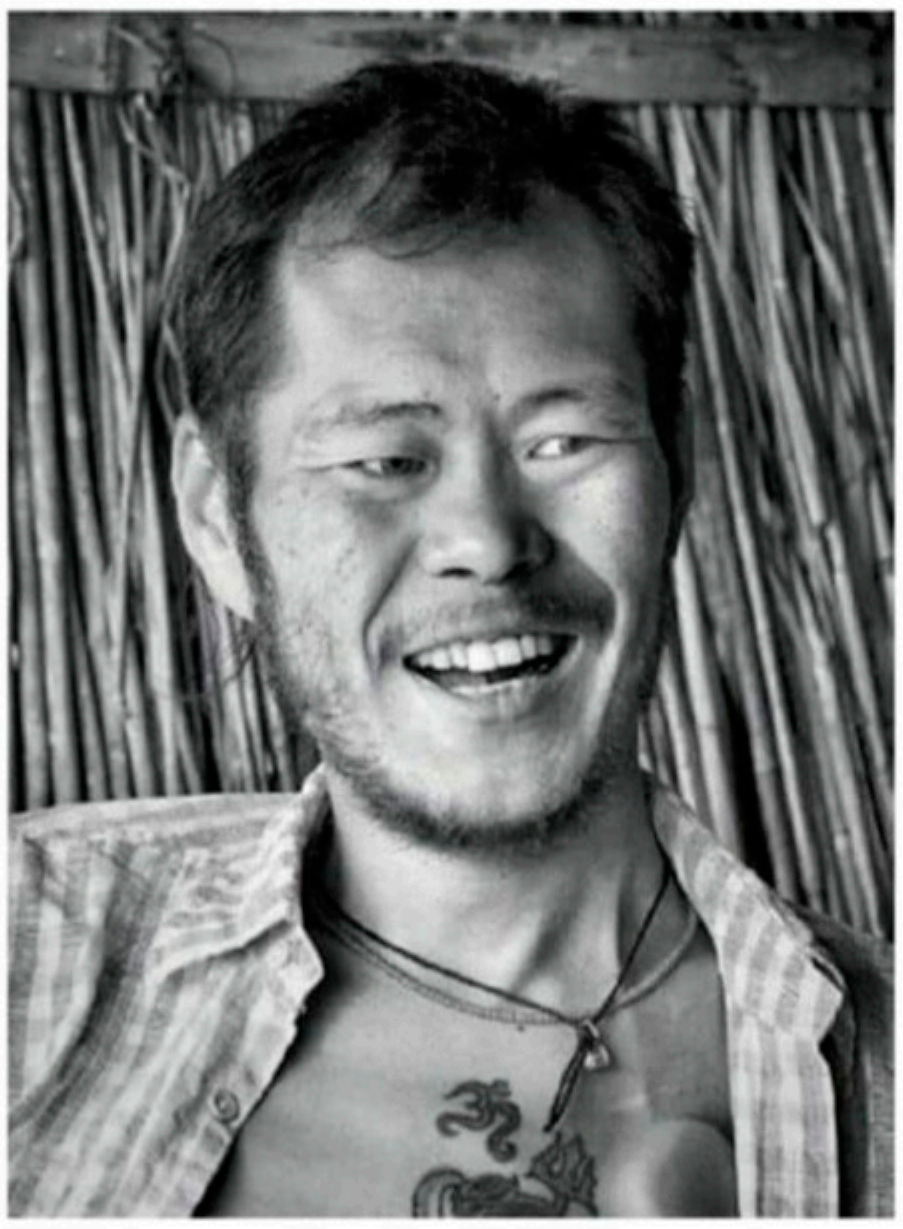


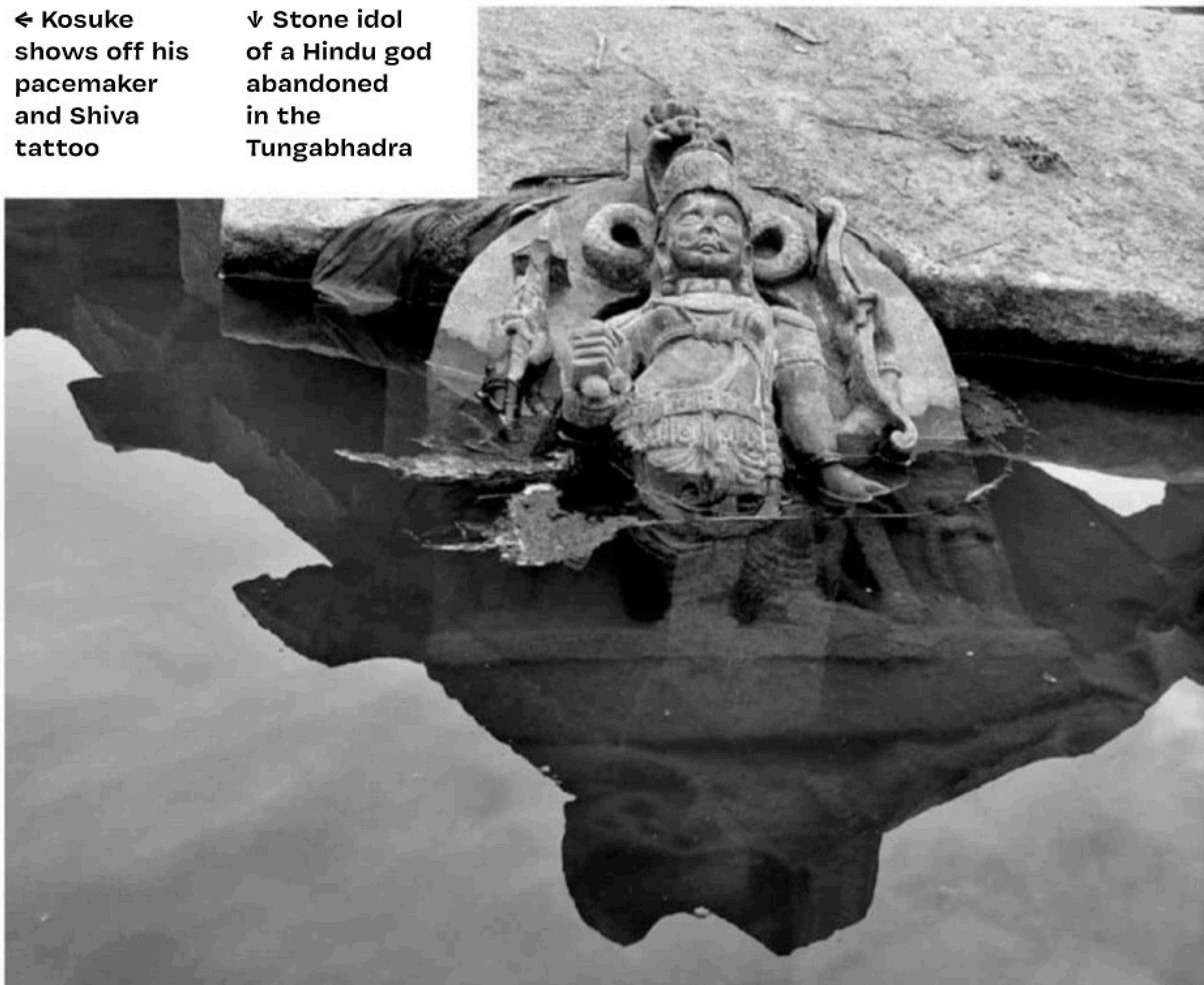
↓ The ruins of a market frozen in time, outside Vitthala Temple

Conquered, pillaged and destroyed, Hampi has stood the assaults of invading armies and time alike



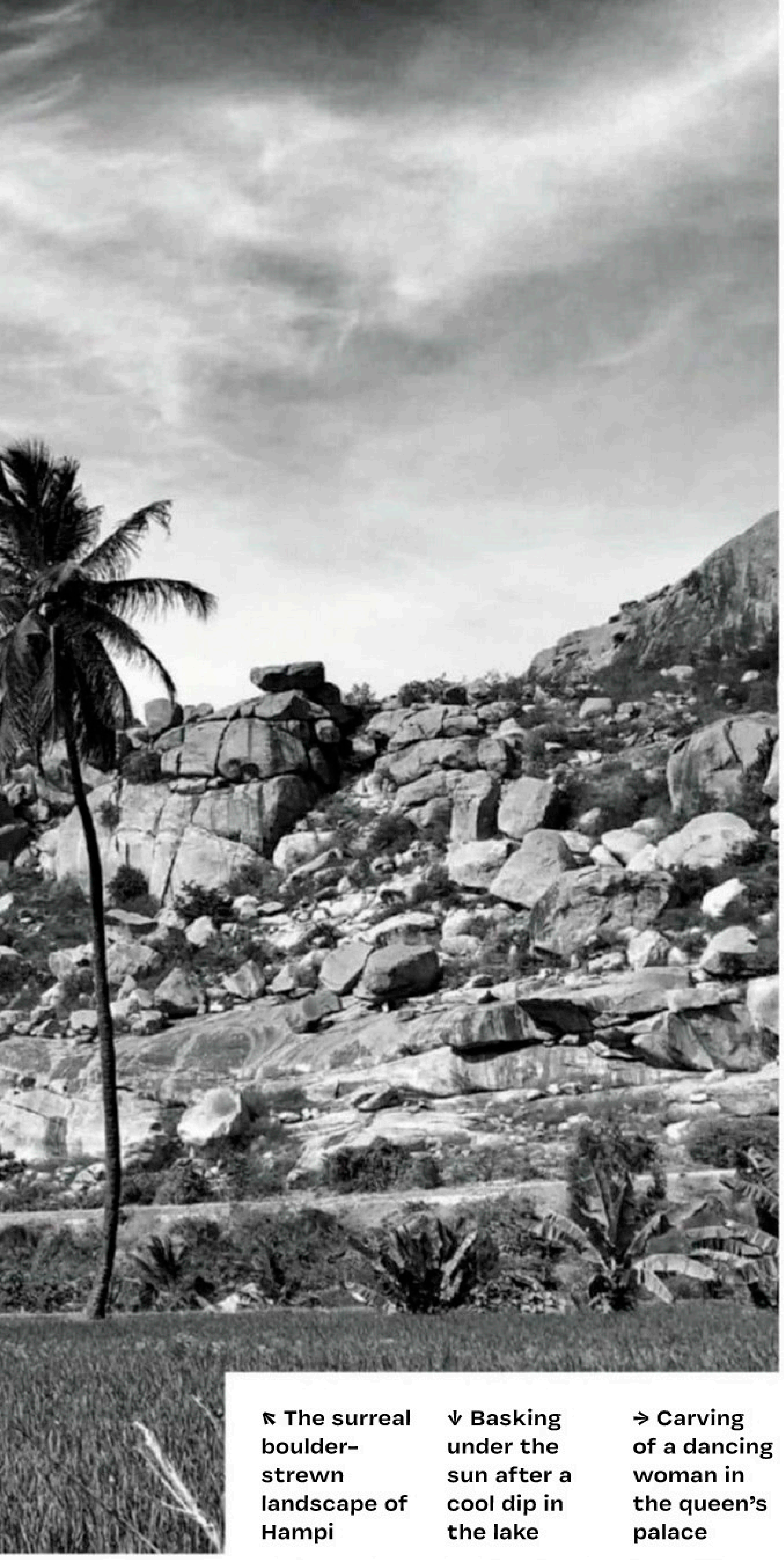
Zipping across the lonely roads on a rented scooter, meditating with sadhus, or marvelling at the architectural masterpieces of a civilisation long gone, Hampi was quite the celluloid dream





← Kosuke shows off his pacemaker and Shiva tattoo

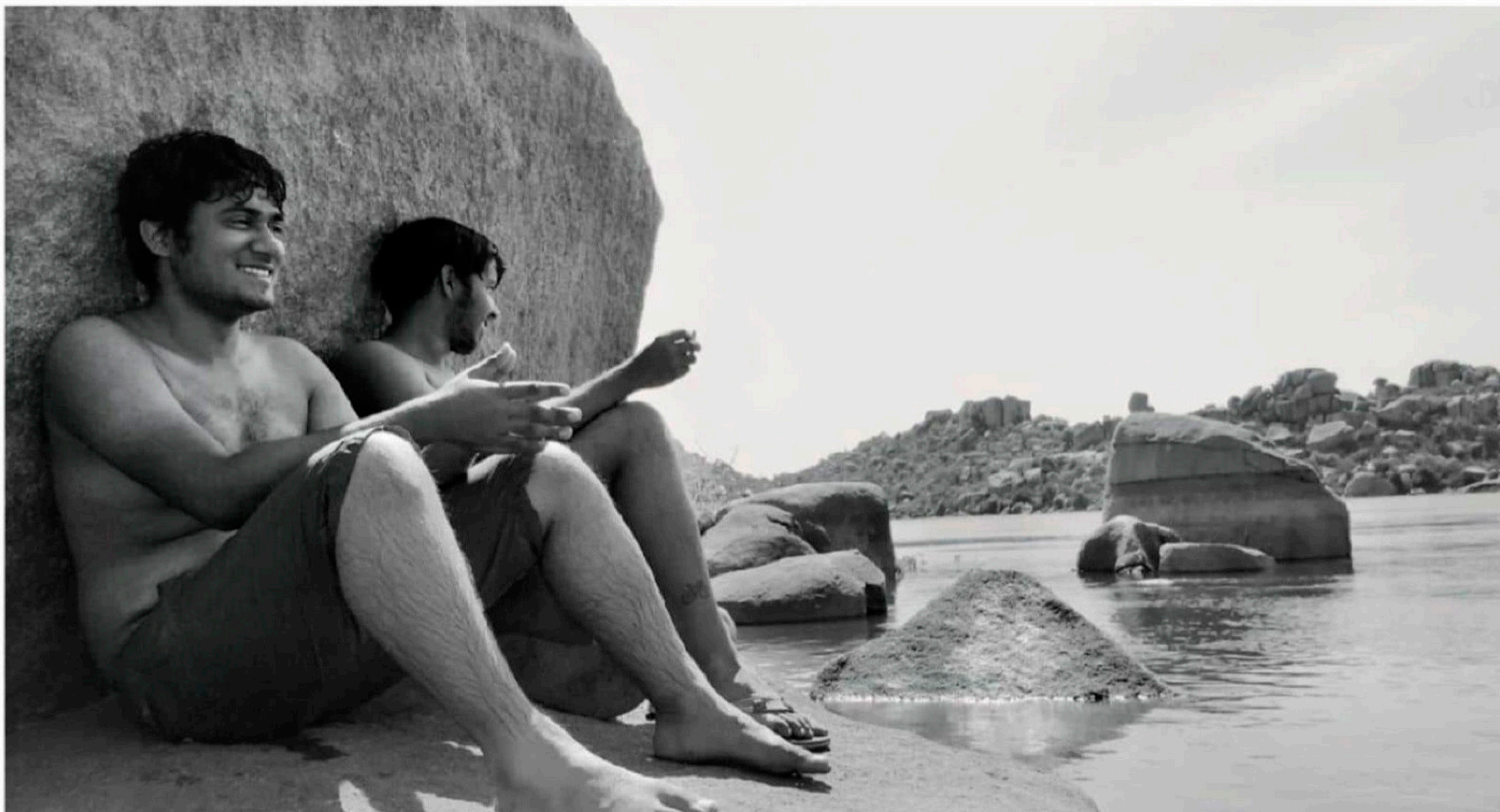
↓ Stone idol of a Hindu god abandoned in the Tungabhadra



↖ The surreal boulder-strewn landscape of Hampi

↓ Basking under the sun after a cool dip in the lake

→ Carving of a dancing woman in the queen's palace



On a trek in search of the hanging monastery,

TRINETRA PAUL

finds herself scaling a mountain, her fears, and getting a new perspective

↗ The steps leading up to the Taktsang Monastery

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

***
In Nature
Mountains, valleys, and views

***
In Togetherness
Adventure, pilgrimage, and leisure

***
In Devotion
Monks, monasteries, and prayers

THE FLYING tigress

STANDING IN FRONT OF punakha dzong

Its mighty white walls, intricate red-patterned roofs, wood carvings, and the calmness that enveloped the entire atmosphere of the monastic fort complex, made time stand still. It was the penultimate day of my week-long adventure in Bhutan.

After a scenic four-hour drive to Paro, my guide Sherab Dorjee greeted us with a cheery "*kuzo zangpo la*." Braving the chilly October winds, my friends and I set off for the base of the Taktsang trek.

The aura and mystery that surrounded the Taktsang—or Tiger's Nest—Monastery had me hooked on Sherab's narrative. In his heavy Bhutanese accent, he explained the age-old saga of how Guru Padmasambhava flew to the site on the back of a tigress from Thimphu to meditate. The monastery has been dedicated to him ever since.

Hidden behind a wall of clouds at 11,000 feet above sea level, Taktsang complemented its legend.

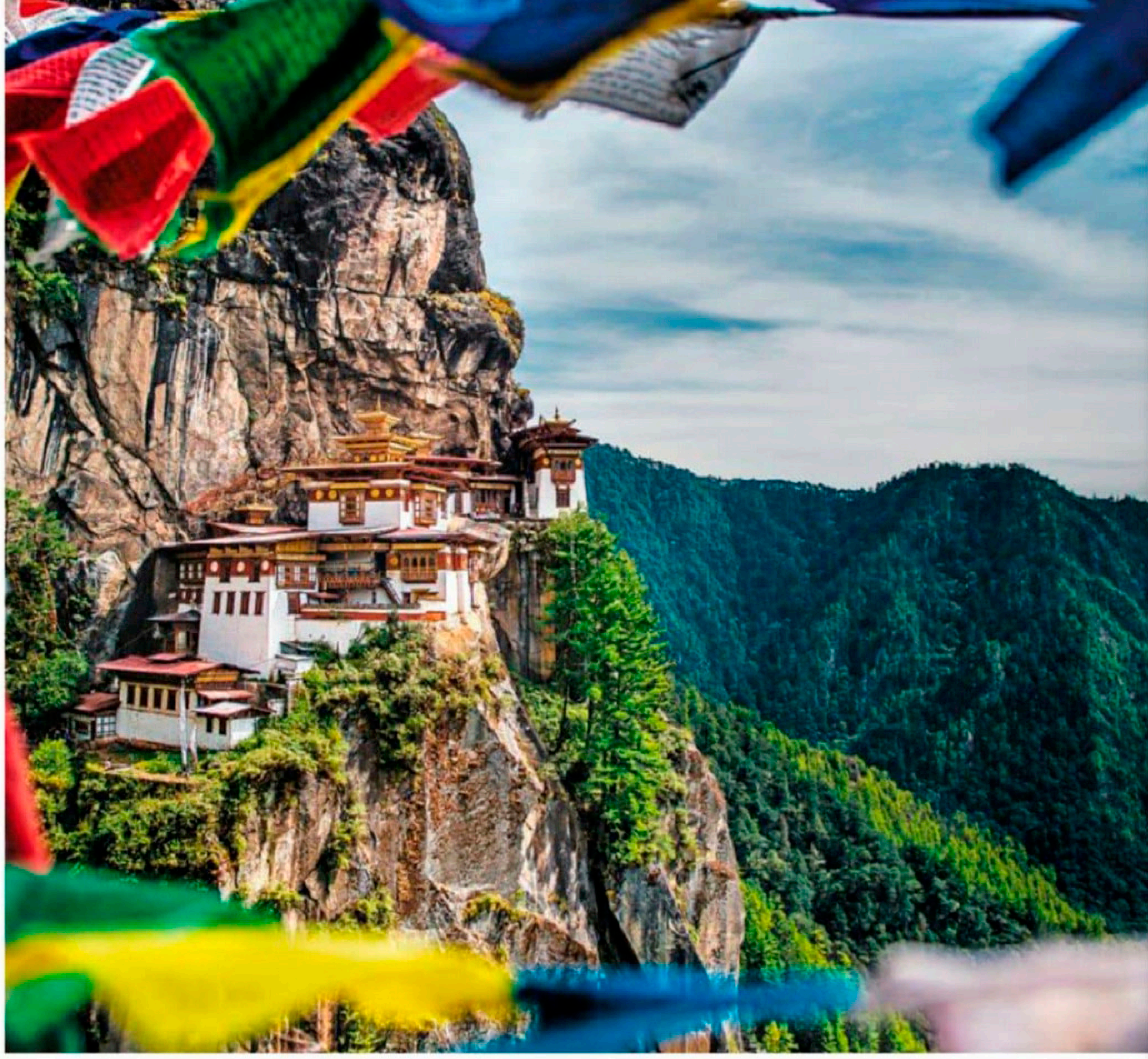
armed WITH BAMBOO STICKS

We set out for the 12-kilometre uphill trek. The greenery of the base was short-lived, as the barren mountainous terrain soon took over. The trail was scant, and loose soil and rolling stones marked just enough room for two people, this was also a bridle path. Occasionally, a horse or two could be seen carrying the elderly up to the cafeteria, halfway to the monastery.

The prayer flags fluttering in the wind formed a canopy of myriad colours above us as the bright sun shone down on the rolling valley of Paro beyond the edge. After an hour of trekking with no monastery in sight, the true expanse of the Himalaya began to dawn on me. You could be an adventure junkie seeking the adrenaline rush, a tourist wanting to visit the revered shrine, or a devotee on an enterprise for blessings, the journey was the same, our paths crossing each others'.

Throughout the trek, our trusty Sherab chewed on betel nuts, never once losing his breath. We, on the other hand, were huffing and puffing away. The guides around us eventually formed a collective of sorts, encouraging each other's patrons through the trek. It was quite easy to spot the locals amid the swarms of tourists. Men in kimono-style *gho*s and women in wrap-around *kera*s effortlessly made their way up the steep slopes.

Nearly two hours had passed and we had lost count of how many times we paused. "Come come, just a little bit more," Sherab egged us on. "We'll reach the rock there and stop," he promised. By giving us incentives to keep walking and setting his own mini-goals, he kept us on our feet. Which was just as well because if we sat, our knees might lock and go numb. Although tired and in pain, the sun-kissed mountain views didn't escape me. The birds were chirping, there was a faint chanting in the background, the guides were chatting around us, but it was a sublime mysticism that kept creeping over me. I had to see



↑ A monk at Punakha Dzong

→ The hanging monastery

the hanging monastery. It was simply non-negotiable.

IT WAS THREE HOURS later

We were halfway up, nearly at the cafeteria. There was a young lady serving tea and biscuits and tourists bee-lined for the empty chairs. It was an intergenerational, international conference, of sorts. There were Buddhist devotees from Myanmar in grey religious cloaks and straw hats, professional trekkers with equipment, elderly folks on a post-retirement trip, honeymooning couples, and young friends like us, all huddled together, sharing photographs. Differences didn't exist in light of the enterprise ahead.

* ***Gho*** **and** ***kera*** **are the national garments of Bhutan. All woollens are worn underneath them**

I could see the monastery in the distance, could even touch it if I closed one eye.

The clouds had passed from the front to form a halo behind it. The only things that separated me from it were three hours and some 700-odd steps. The promise of a photo-spot was Sherab's next proposed mini-goal. We gave in and set out for the last leg of our climb.

The birds were chirping, there was a faint chanting in the background, the guides were chatting around us, but it was a sublime mysticism that kept creeping over me. I had to see the hanging monastery. It was simply non-negotiable

A few kilometres into the trek we came across the Taktsang Zangdo Pari, or the caretaker's house. It was where Padmasambhava's wife—called the 'Fairy of Wisdom'—lived. She, Yeshe Tshogyal, had founded the Mon, or the Taktsang Convent. Today, an old nun and her young apprentice act as the caretaker.

Miraculously, the path had gotten even narrower. Soon, true to his word, Sherab unveiled a breathtaking view of the monastery. Hanging from the edge of the mountain, it almost appeared to blend in with nature. We climbed a few more steps, deposited our phones and cameras, took off our shoes, and went inside the revered Taktsang Monastery.

WE WERE greeted BY MONKS

Tending to the butter lamps or brooming the premises, they were also talking to the guests or silently praying. Essential to Buddhist custom, the butter lamps must never die out. Time stood by like an onlooker as the humdrum of the world ceased to exist atop this mountain.

Built in the typical Bhutanese style of architecture, the monastery, with its beautiful floral motifs, hung loosely from the mountain cliff. I couldn't wrap my head around how they constructed it back in the day. Sherab told us that a massive fire broke out in 1998 that destroyed large parts of the complex. The restoration went on for two years before the monastery was reopened.

Just when we were soaking up the breathtaking view and the serenity of the holy place, Sherab took us into a cave deep underground—the actual Tiger's Nest—

where Guru Padmasambhava's tigress rested and lived. We crisscrossed down the wooden planks, more than a little scared.

But after all that trekking all that way, there was no question of missing this part of my spiritual adventure.

The atmosphere was enveloped by the loud hymns of the grey-cloaked devotees. Spreading straw mats, they sat in front of the main altar and prayed with folded hands. The children, who were earlier running around, joined their parents in prayer. Devotion and spirituality mingled with nature in its purest form here.

Spreading straw mats, they sat in front of the main altar and prayed with folded hands. The children, who were earlier running around, joined their parents in prayer. Devotion and spirituality mingled with nature in its purest form here

It was 5pm when we returned to our van, exhausted after trekking for nearly nine hours. The Taktsang Trek brought a myriad of people together, and the Bhutanese hospitality wove them into one.

wait

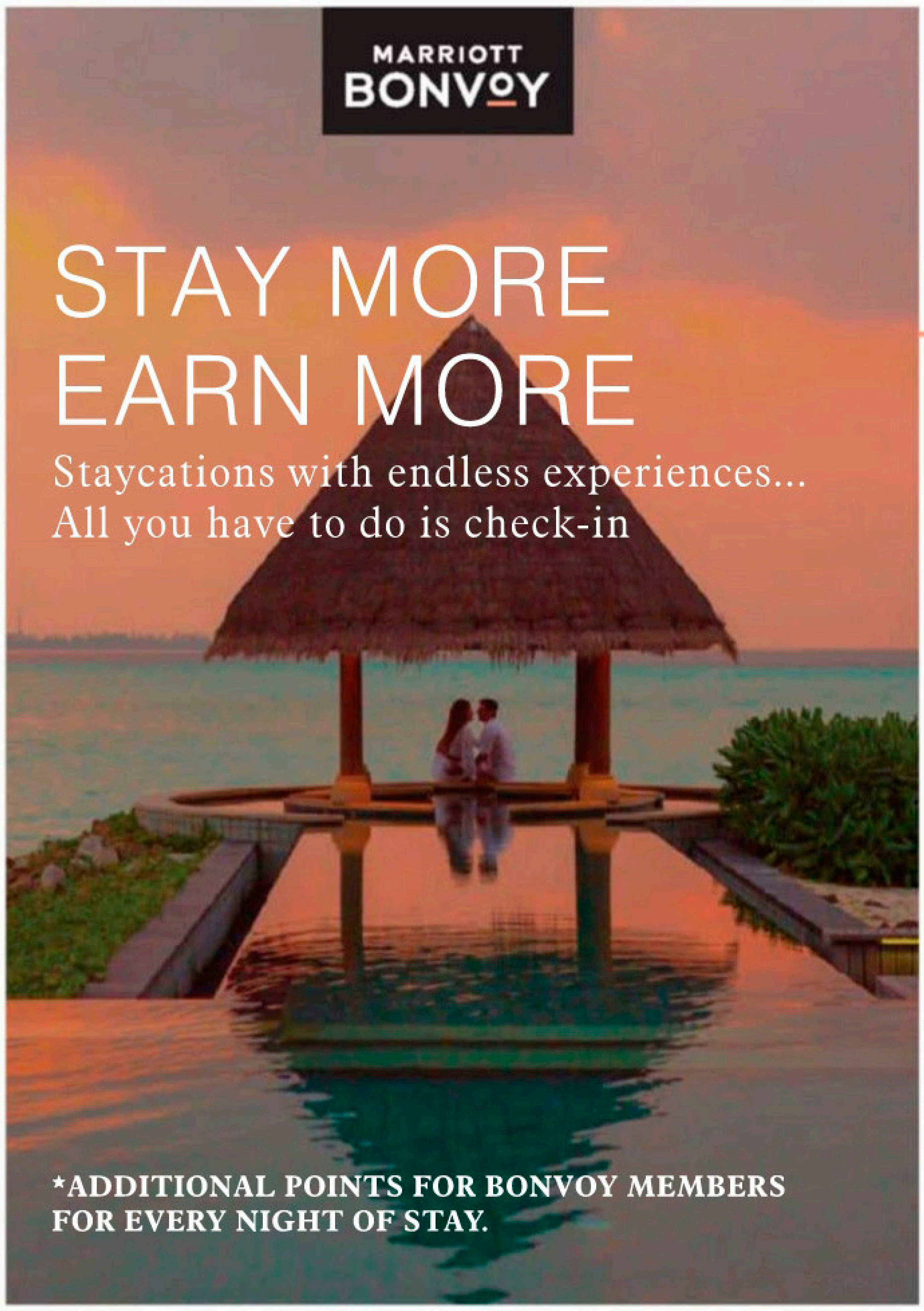
THERE'S MORE

Bhutan can be reached via direct and connecting flights from almost all major cities in India. International flights are also available to Paro International Airport. For a better experience, try getting a window seat on the right side while going, and on the left on your return journey to catch a glimpse of the Everest peak.

You can also drive through India with an 'entry permit' via West Bengal, through New Jalpaiguri and in through the Phuensholing Border. This permit only allows you to visit Paro and Thimphu. To venture beyond, you must acquire a 'special area permit' from the Royal Government of Bhutan Immigration Office in Thimphu. It is also possible to arrange the visa from Kolkata at the Royal Bhutan Consulate Office.

* **It was only in 1974 that Bhutan started tourism. Before that, no leisure travel was allowed**

In Paro, apart from the Taktsang Trek, you can drive to Chelela Pass and visit the National Museum of Bhutan. Bhutan is famous for its wooden souvenirs like wooden darts, wall hangings, masks and mythical figurines, and also traditional hand-painted ceramic wares. The capital city is well known for exquisite handmade *gho* and *kera*. They can range from thousands to a few lakh in price depending on the weaving, material, and detailing.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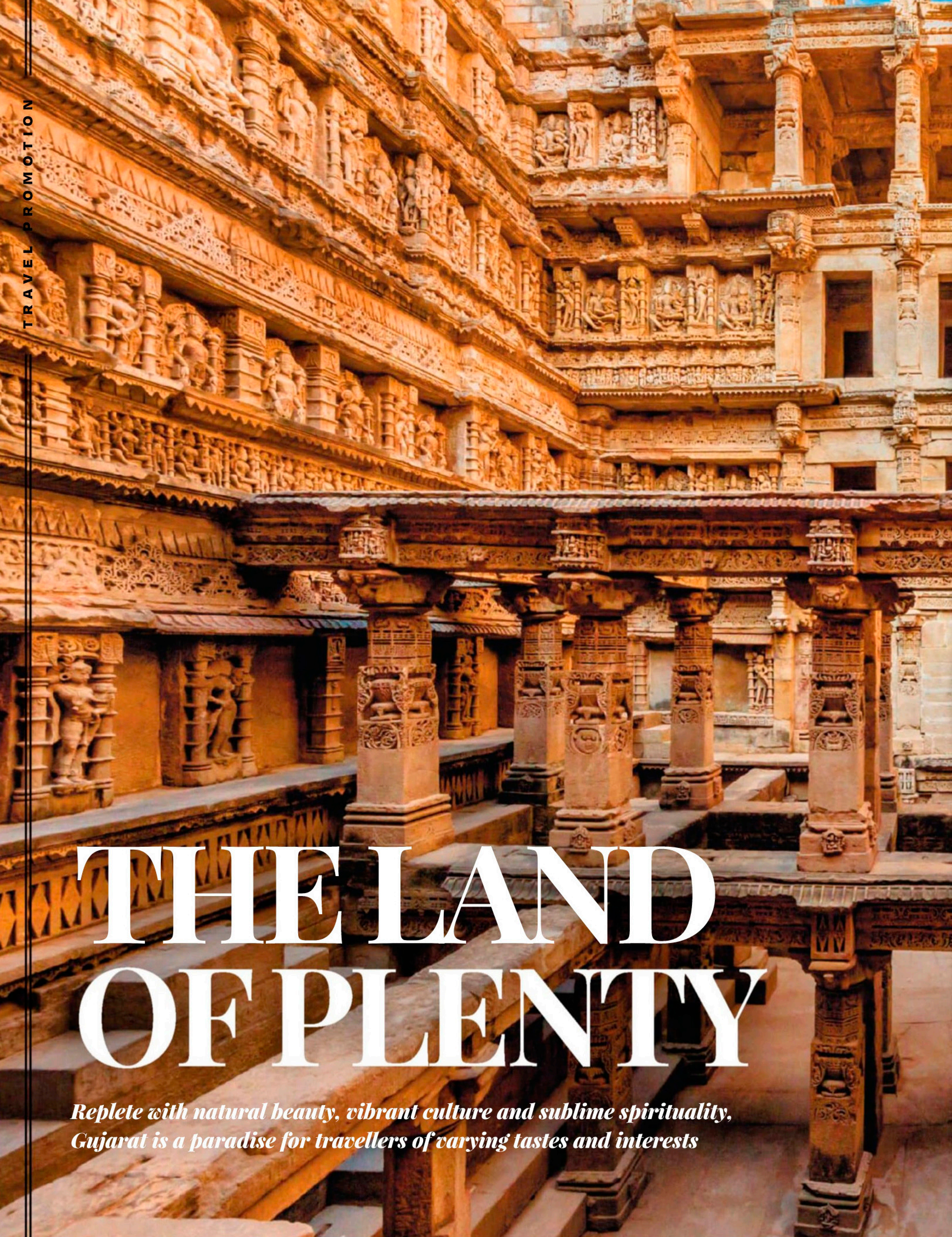


THE LAND OF PLENTY

Replete with natural beauty, vibrant culture and sublime spirituality, Gujarat is a paradise for travellers of varying tastes and interests

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

Rani ki Vav is an ancient 11th-century seven-storeyed step well located by the Saraswati River

Be one with nature and experience wildlife at its best in the national parks, soak up the rich culture and heritage at the numerous century-old monuments and historical sites, or be a part of the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi at his birthplace and ashram, the splendour of Gujarat is abundant.

Located on the extreme west of India, the state is laced with beautiful beaches and rolling hills that make for some fun eco-tourism spots. The pristine white sands of the Rann of Kutch makes a desert of unparalleled beauty. All of this, peppered with vibrant and colourful festivals and culture, you simply cannot miss out on Gujarat.

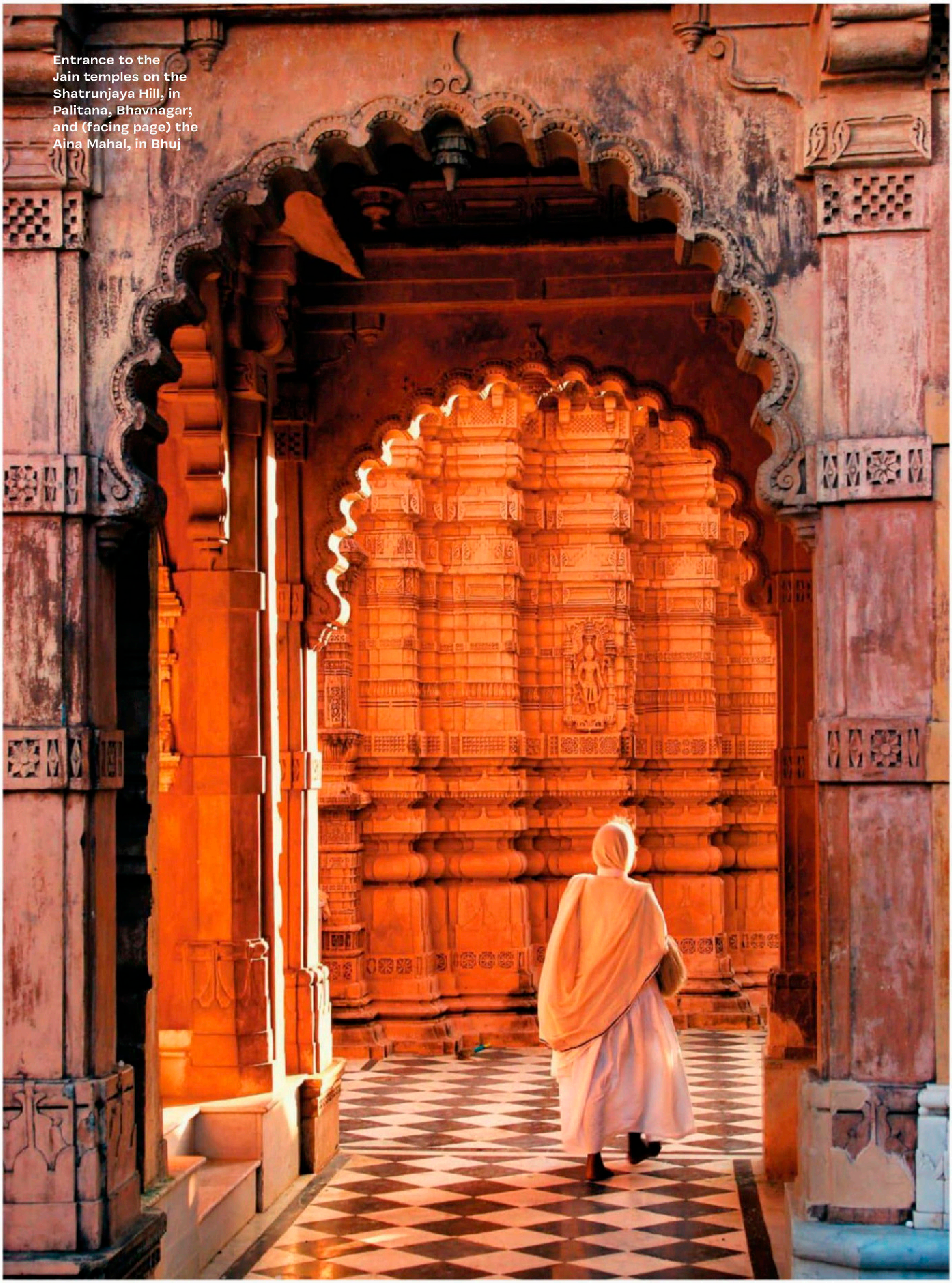
Old World Charm

Witness the ruins of the flourishing Indus Valley civilisation unfurl before you at the towns of Lothal and Dholavira. The brilliant township planning, the ancient drainage system, granaries and many wonders of the civilisation that rose to prominence around 3300 BCE can be found here. The civilisation pushes the recorded history of India by almost 200 years. As part of one of the most advanced civilisations, the towns have seals that show the then international trade relations that were carried out from Gujarat's ports.

Vadodara is also home to yet another brilliant historical monument, the Laxmivilas Palace. Built in the Indo-Saracenic style, the palace dates back to 1890. Known to be the largest private dwelling property, its size is estimated to be four times that of Buckingham Palace.

Witness the Indus Valley civilisation unfurl before you at the towns of Lothal and Dholavira. The brilliant township planning, the ancient drainage system, and granaries from 3300 BCE can be found here

Ancient India boasts of some unimaginable architectural wonders, and buildings that define engineering marvels. One such specimen can be found in the city of Patan. Rani ki Vav is an ancient 11th-century seven-storeyed step well located by the Saraswati River. A Unesco World Heritage Site, the well was constructed by Queen Udayamti, wife of the Chalukya dynasty king Bhima I after his death. The well has beautiful intricate carvings of over 800 deities and is built to use the river water to supply cool air. The revered Somnath Temple is located just a few kilometres from Patan. A holy site of pilgrimage for Hindus, the temple is a



Entrance to the Jain temples on the Shatrunjaya Hill, in Palitana, Bhavnagar; and (facing page) the Aina Mahal, in Bhuj magnificent example of architecture with intricate detailing and exquisite carvings.

The Champaner-Pavagadh Archeological Park, another Unesco World Heritage Site, is home to magnificent forts, mosques, temples and exquisite architecture, which is bound to leave you astounded. Located around 45 kilometres from Vadodara, the city of Champaner, founded in the 8th century, was forgotten during the colonial times. Today, the lush forests surrounding the fort and the various monuments make it a treat for travellers wanting a peek into the ancient times.

When in Gujarat, one cannot miss the city of Vadodara. The recently-built Statue of Unity—a mammoth 182 metre-tall statue of Sardar Vallabhai Patel—is a major attraction here. Built over five years and completed in 2018, the statue is a huge symbol of unity, peace and strength that symbolises the country.

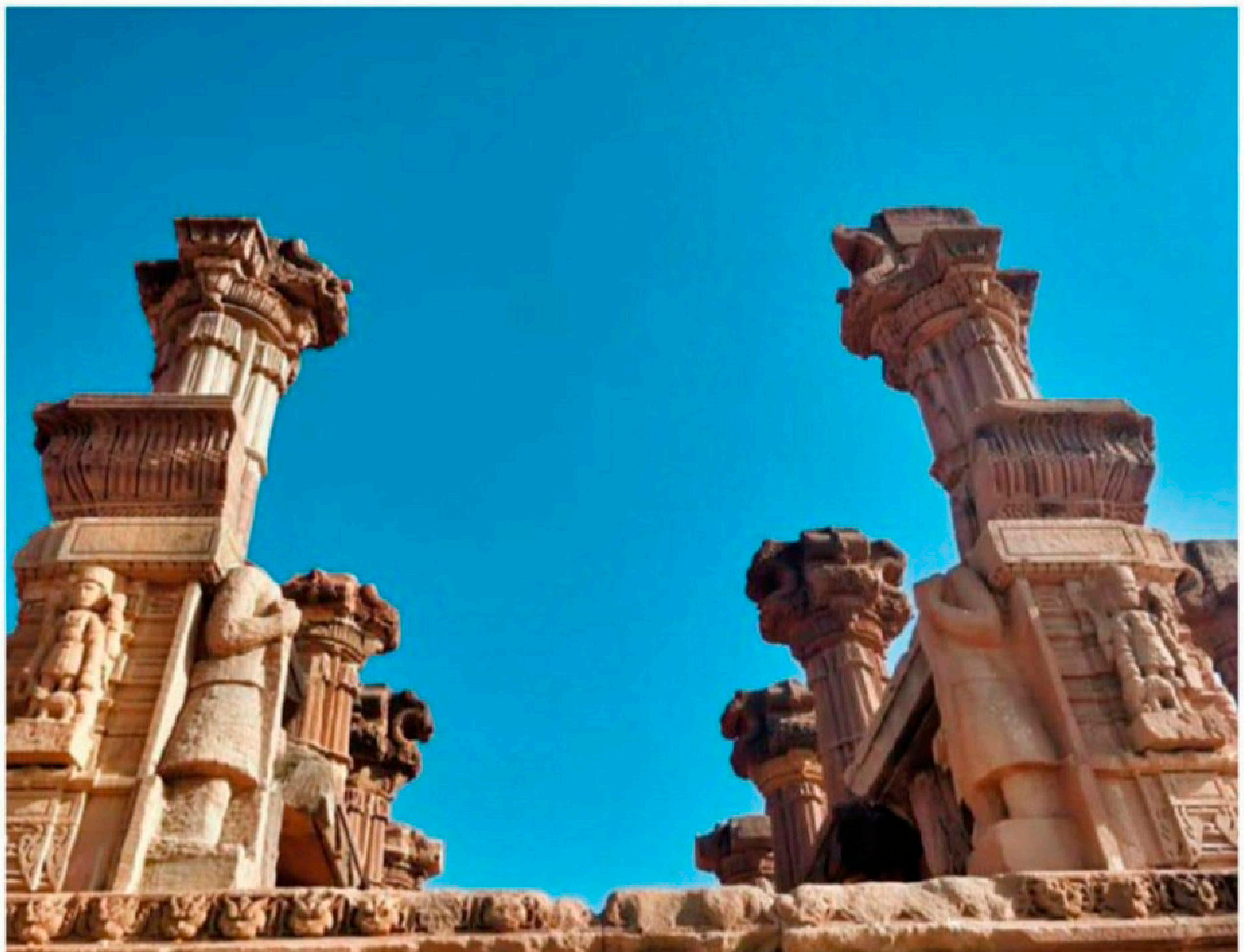
The birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, the cradle of the Dandi March, Gujarat breathes in the essence and principles left by the Father of the Nation. His ashram at Sabarmati and his home in Porbandar are places that will take you down the yesteryears, which saw the rise of Indian freedom struggle. Even today the Sabarmati Ashram continues to follow his teachings and serve the nation in their own way.

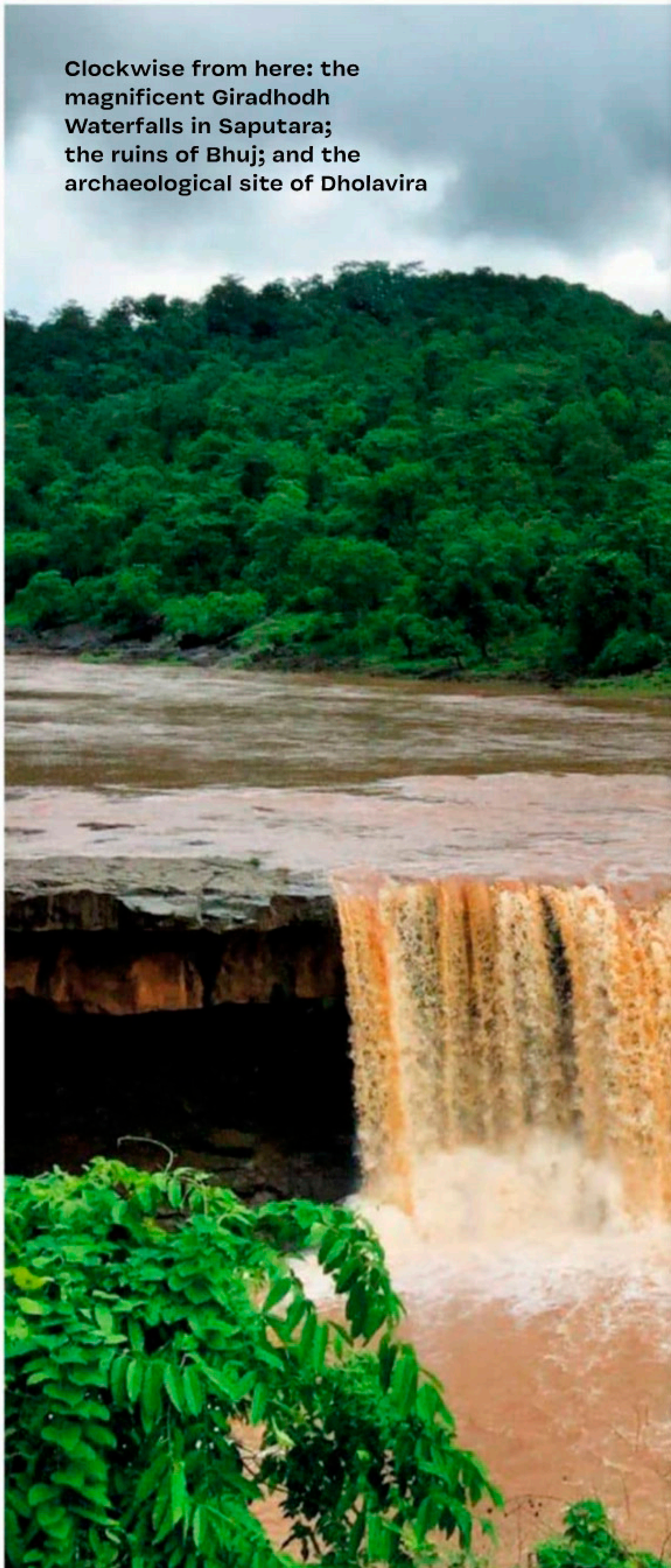
> ***The mosques, temples and exquisite architecture here is bound to leave you astounded. Located near Vadodara, the city of Champaner, founded in the 8th century, was forgotten during the colonial times***

TIME FOR ADVENTURE

If you are looking for something fun and challenging, Gujarat has everything you need. From forests to beaches, hill stations to deserts, the state has it all.

The Rann of Kutch is, undoubtedly, a must visit. Boundless stretches of





Clockwise from here: the magnificent Giradhodh Waterfalls in Saputara; the ruins of Bhuj; and the archaeological site of Dholavira

white saltpans make up the largest salt marshes in India. The salt desert is home to a number of endangered animals, like the nilgai. If you are looking for some fun try the golf cart, ATV ride, camel cart excursion and paramotoring while you soak up the rich Gujarati culture. Visit during the winter months—November to February—to witness the grand carnival and revelry that is the Rann Utsav. Bright colourful traditional performances, musicals, shows, dances and many other activities unfurl throughout these four months. Try to stay overnight during a full moon to catch the Rann in its glittering glory.

Situated in northern Gujarat and tucked away amidst some dense forests is the Polo Monument in Vijaynagar. Don't be taken aback by the word, the name derives from a Marwari word 'Pol' meaning gate. A hike to the monument through the forest would take you to the Gujarat-Rajasthan border, a region marked by extreme conditions.

Right next to the Thar desert, you might think Gujarat has nothing 'cool' to offer. Hold that thought. The pristine hill station of Saputara is the quaint getaway that you might be looking for. Flanked by the Sahyadri Hills, Saputara offers some beautiful hiking trails, rapid waterfalls as well as a wide range of flora and fauna. So, if you're the one looking for adventure and fun along with relaxation, head to the hills for the right kind of rejuvenation.

With one of the longest coastlines in India, Gujarat is home to a number of pristine beaches. A beautiful azure sea, loose white sands and a plethora of activities, Mandvi is one of the most prominent ones.

One of the longest and pivotal dams in India, the Sardar Sarovar Dam is a major spot for eco-tourism. Built across the Narmada River, the place is visited by millions to experience the scenic beauty from the top of the dam. The gallons of water stored on one side and the incredible roar when the barges are lifted make for a splendid sight.

Boundless stretches of white saltpans make up the largest salt marshes in India. The salt desert is home to a number of endangered animals, including the nilgai

Visit the expansive Rann of Kutch during the winter months—November to February—to witness the grand carnival and revelry that is the Rann Utsav

WILD WILD WEST

Moving over historical places, natural beauty and eco-tourism, the bounty of exotic wildlife that the state has to offer will leave you speechless. For all the wildlife enthusiasts and shutterbugs, you have just entered the land of the Asiatic lion.

Gir National Park is the home to the largest population of Asiatic lions in India. Spread over an area of 1,412 sq km, it is home to over 20 lions, nilgais, deer, large numbers of birds and other animals. You can book safaris and enter the core area for splendid sightings of the royal beasts.

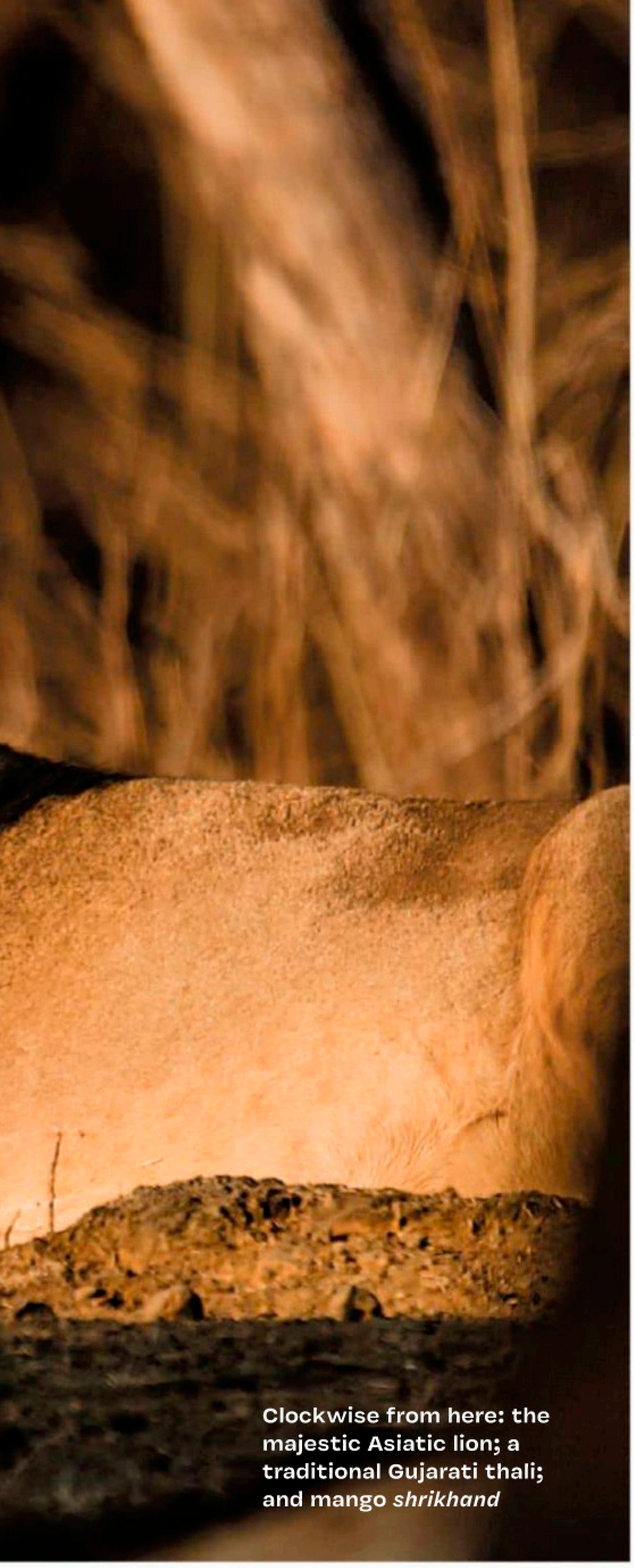
A haven for bird lovers, the Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary is located just about 65 kilometres off the capital city of Ahmedabad. It receives hundreds of migratory birds like Siberian cranes, pelicans, herons, and flamingoes. Native to the sanctuary are about 210 species of birds and mammals along with various flora species. Walk around the entire area for a wholesome experience and be surrounded by incessant chirping of birds.

Located off the coast of Dwarka, the Marine National Park is a repository of some intriguing marine animals, corals and plants. Filled with sea sponges, anemones, fish, turtles, and urchins, the Marine National Park is a must-visit for all nature lovers.

Being very close to the coast, a small community of the Kharwas has developed a taste for seafood like prawns, pomfrets, etc.

CHOW DOWN

Coming to Gujarat and not trying the local fare is like missing half the experience. Indulge in some traditional



Clockwise from here: the majestic Asiatic lion; a traditional Gujarati thali; and mango *shrikhand*

Gujarati snacks like *thepla, handvo, khakra, fafda, dhokla* and many others while sipping on some cool and refreshing masala *chaas* or buttermilk. One of the prominent shops to buy these snacks is Annadiben Shop, which has outlets all over the state. Also don't forget to try the traditional Gujarati thali. It comes with a couple of fried or steamed snacks called *farsans*, a green vegetable dish, a tuber or gourd dish, a braised pulse or bean dish called *kathol*, among others. Gujarati *kadhi* is a yogurt-based lentil soup, which is common with the *rotla* and will be accompanied by *chutti dal, vaal,* or *mag ni dal*.

Indulge in some traditional Gujarati snacks like **thepla, handvo, khakra, fafda, dhokla** ***and many others while sipping on some cool and refreshing masala*** **chaas** ***or buttermilk***

The thali also comes with breads like thick *bajra rotla*s, thin wheat *rotlis*, crispy whole wheat flour rotis known as *bakhris*, parathas, savoury spiced breads called *thepla*, and deep-fried *puris*. There are also variations like *methi thepla* or masala *puri* in these. The thali comes with sweet, sour and spicy chutneys, pickles, ghee and chopped vegetable salad served raw or steamed with spices.

Dry sweets and those made from coconut, jaggery and mangoes like *doodhpak, mohanthal, shrikhand* and laddoos are a staple. Most of these are made during special festivals and occasions but can be easily found in any restaurant.

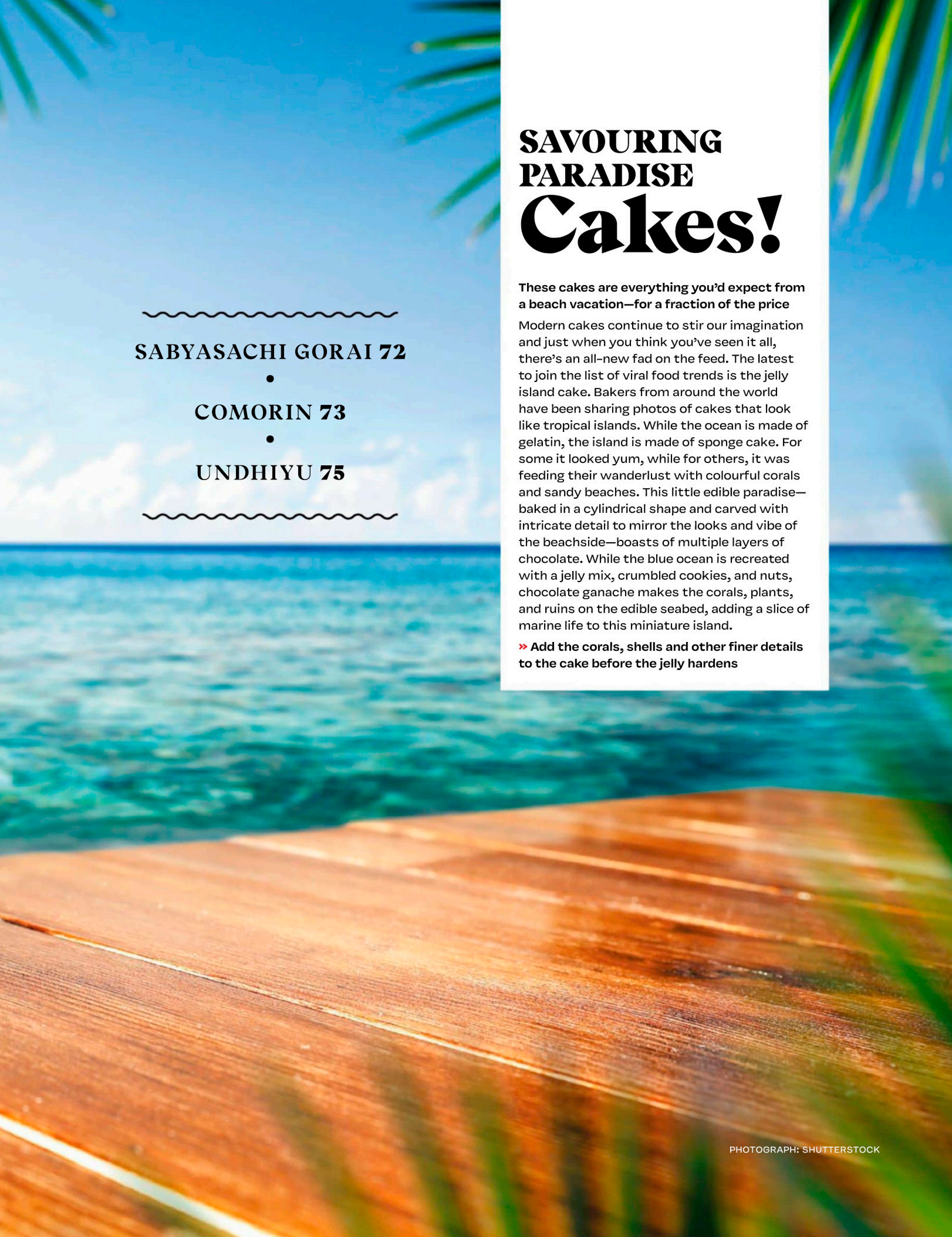
With the palate changing every few kilometres, Gujarat has a wide-spread buffet to spoil travellers and visitors in every way.

Gujarat Tourism

Khushboo Gujarat Ki

eat

TRAVEL ONE BITE AT A TIME



SABYASACHI GORAI **72**
•
COMORIN **73**
•
UNDHIYU **75**

SAVOURING PARADISE Cakes!

These cakes are everything you'd expect from a beach vacation—for a fraction of the price

Modern cakes continue to stir our imagination and just when you think you've seen it all, there's an all-new fad on the feed. The latest to join the list of viral food trends is the jelly island cake. Bakers from around the world have been sharing photos of cakes that look like tropical islands. While the ocean is made of gelatin, the island is made of sponge cake. For some it looked yum, while for others, it was feeding their wanderlust with colourful corals and sandy beaches. This little edible paradise—baked in a cylindrical shape and carved with intricate detail to mirror the looks and vibe of the beachside—boasts of multiple layers of chocolate. While the blue ocean is recreated with a jelly mix, crumbled cookies, and nuts, chocolate ganache makes the corals, plants, and ruins on the edible seabed, adding a slice of marine life to this miniature island.

» **Add the corals, shells and other finer details to the cake before the jelly hardens**

PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK

TRAVEL MENU

72

Sabyasachi Gorai Cooks American Birds

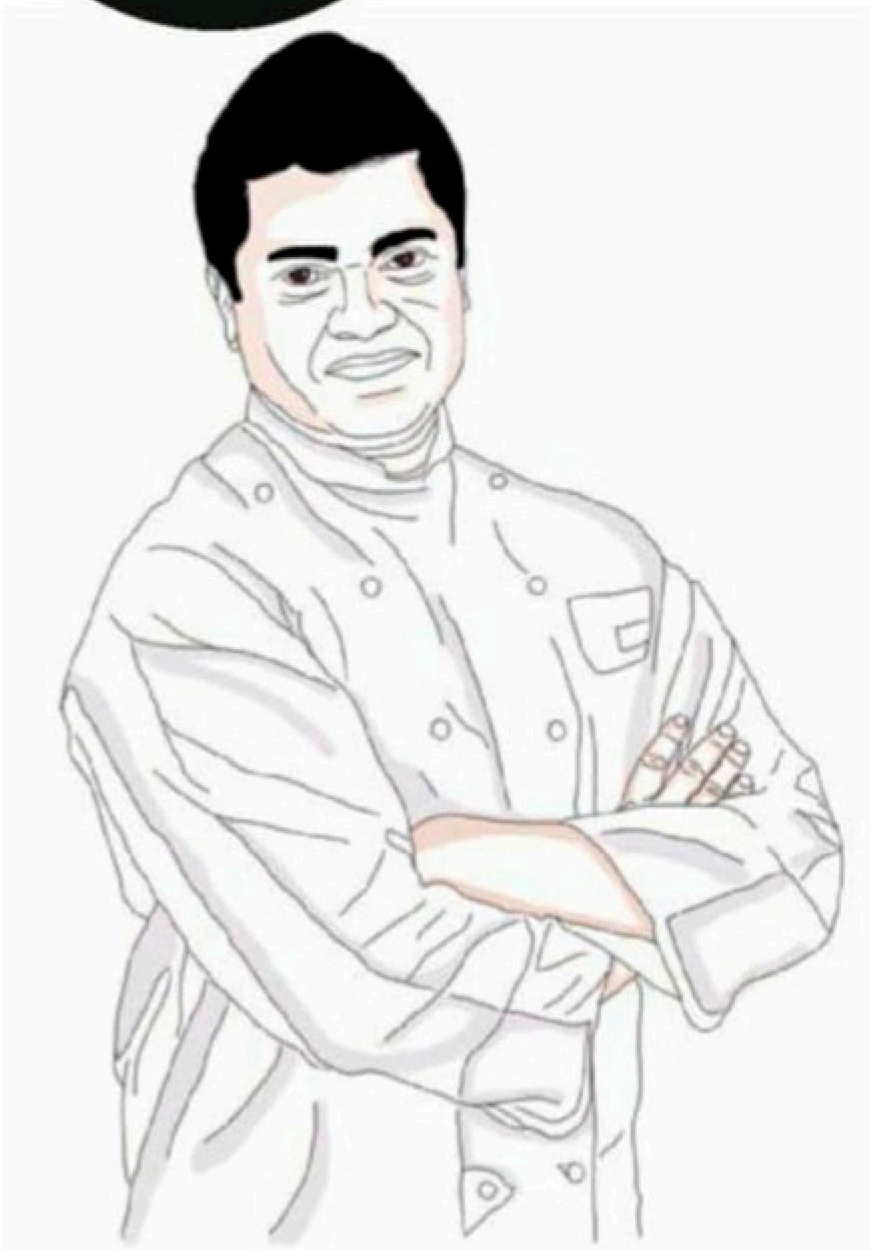


ILLUSTRATION: CHITVAN PATEL

With chicken, duck, and turkey from the US, Chef **Sabyasachi Gorai** has been cooking up a feathery storm at his Deli for a select few. We got a taste

» What was the experience of cooking with American poultry meats like?

It was amazing. Not only is the quality of the meat great, the packaging is also hygienic and tamper-proof. Upon thawing, the meat was plump, had a beautiful pink colour, and smelled exactly like fresh meat. Not a single bird has any scratches. What impressed me the most was that every single bird weighed the same, which then gave me the same yield for the dishes each time.

» How familiar are you with these ingredients?

I have been working with US poultry for the last three years and so am very familiar with the ingredients. We have done the turkey challenge previously. We have worked with the chicken at Byg Brewski, Bengaluru and currently at Saby's Deli we only use US chicken. Being the brand ambassador for the Great Indian Turkey Challenge, I did a lot of work with turkey. Last year, I did a poultry programme in Atlanta with Chef Chris and created a lot of Indian recipes. So I am also pouring in all of that experience into this.

» Are turkey and duck amenable to Indian cuisine?

Both duck and turkey work beautifully with Indian cuisine. Once deboned, turkey meat can be used for boneless dishes, and also made into a keema. The boneless pieces can be turned into nice *boti* pieces that most Indians like to use. The great quality of duck breast lends itself to mild Indian curries, especially southern and eastern ones. The duck leg works for classic dishes such as the duck biryani we prepare at Saby's Deli.

» What spirits or wines would you suggest pairing the menu with?

For the kababs and keema *khari* I strongly suggest cocktails, something along the lines of the jamun cocktail, a part of 'Savour the Flavour: US Poultry & Eggs with Desi Tadka'. The jungle *maas* works great with white wine or white spirits. Our duck *mussalman* biryani and chicken ghee roast are best paired with matured red wines, whiskies and malts.

↑ For Duckshin Delight (Kerala duck breast stew) I would suggest dry white wine

» How is American chicken different from our good ol' broiler?

The meat is of a much superior quality. Not only does it have a gamey flavour, it's meatier, and gives a very high yield.

» Even the desserts were special. Not only did the chocolate mousse with Old Monk pack a punch, it heaved with nostalgia. How important is memory for you as a chef?

Storytelling is an important part of my food. Without that, I feel the food is incomplete. One cannot experience the food 100% or, let's say, the way it needs to be, without a story.

—AMIT DIXIT

CHEF RECOMMENDS

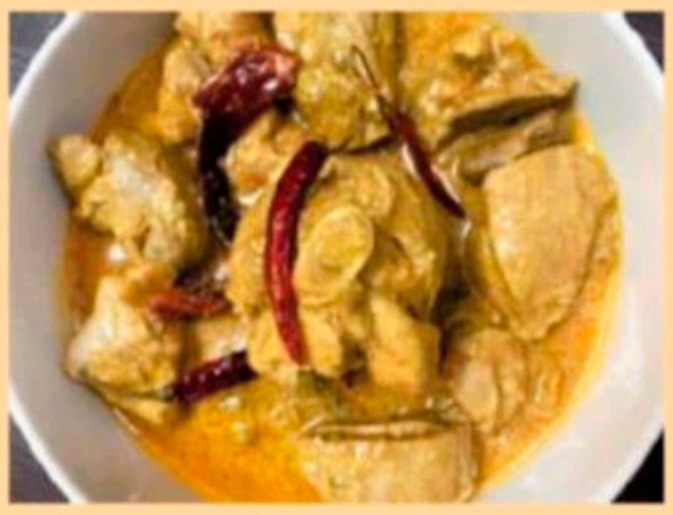
GORAI'S FAVOURITE PICKS FROM THE 'SAVOUR THE FLAVOUR MENU'

Duck Mussalman Biryani

With a plump duck leg as its centrepiece, this fragrant biryani comes laced with caramelised onions and tastes as authentic as they come

Jungle Maas

This fiery Indian classic, which keeps the hunting tradition of the maharajas alive, gets an American twist with turkey leg slow cooked in an earthen pot



ALL-DAY DINING

A Desi Touch

COMORIN BRINGS TOGETHER a restaurant, bar, café and a curated market, all under one roof. The design, a blend of retro-futuristic installations and modest, traditional touches creates a stylish, contemporary and relaxed ambience. The 'Green Room' on the other end of the restaurant, caters to those who have their heart set on a more intimate dining experience. With a menu that boasts of an Indian-casual selection—a space much harder to crack than the mainstream fine dining—Comorin does not conform to a template. Chefs Manish Mehrotra and Dhiraj Dargan, the brains behind this all-day dining restaurant, tirelessly style every recipe to deliver the decadent dishes. Enhanced by a mix of spices, the Andhra gongura chicken, *bhetki paturi* with Bengali *khichdi* and plastic chutney, prawn curry with dried red mango, red rice and *appalam* and the Champaran meat with *sattu* paratha and *ole ki* chutney, particularly stand out. I find myself going for seconds while relishing the carefully crafted *bheja* fry and *khasta* roti. The *raan musallam* with fried aloo, baked garlic, and *mewa* pulao is also worth trying. The dessert menu is a whirlwind of flavours. I settled for the humble *cheeni malai* toast. The crispiness of the toast juxtaposing the *malai* is a fitting ending to a delightfully atypical meal. Currently, the restaurant is open for dine-in only from Wednesday to Sunday.

—RUPALI DEAN

* **Do not miss the mutton *seekh* kabab doused in butter and scoop it up with Kashmiri roti**

Comorin

☒ GURUGRAM

Just when you think Indian cuisine is getting too predictable, Comorin's brilliance leaves you poring over a selection of unusual flavours

» Comorin, 101, 1st Floor, Plaza Level, Two Horizon Center, Golf Course Road

• Wed–Sun 1.00pm–10.00pm

← Comorin pav vada with garlic chutney

UPDATES

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What's hot in the food world?

GLOBAL ADVENTURES FOR THE DESI PALATE

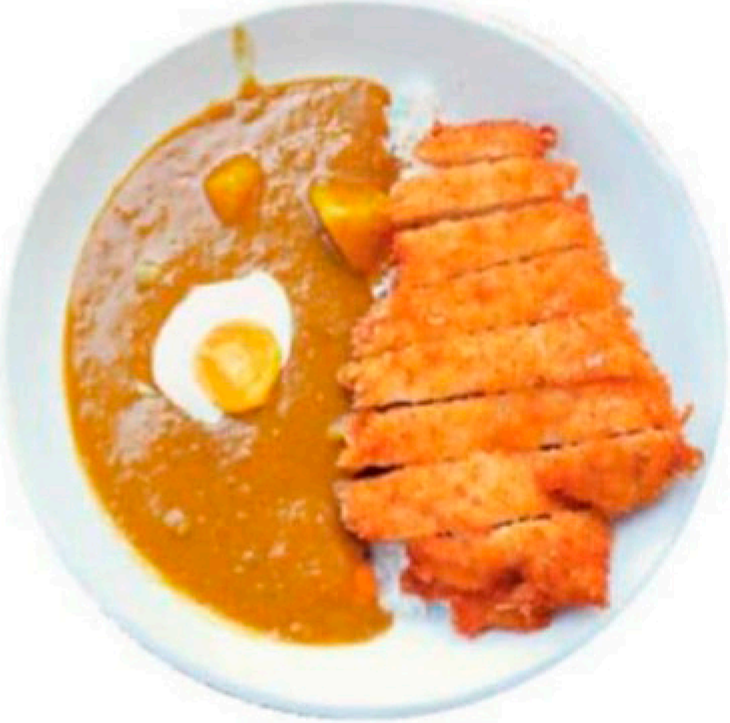
Uncharted Territories

☒ INDIA

As the second season of the National Geographic series *Uncharted* hits the small screens, it has left the multi-Michelin Star chef Gordon Ramsay's loyal fanbase in a frenzy. According to curators of the India episode, Anurag Mallick and Priya Ganapathy, the challenge was to see how India would measure up against an expansive global ensemble. In the latest season, Ramsay can be seen unlocking the complex flavours of South India, one spice at a time.

» Catch all the episodes of *Gordon Ramsay: Uncharted* on Disney+Hotstar

COURTESY: ANURAG MALLICK



CoCo Curry

☒ GURUGRAM

If you're craving for a bit of *tonkatsu* then maybe a pit-stop at Gurugram is all you need for now. Japanese curry restaurant CoCo Ichibanya recently opened its first outlet in India. While the ultimate curry battle between the Japanese and Indian variations seems to be never ending, Ichibanya is adapting to the Indian culture, whereby their beef and pork dishes will be replaced with chicken and seafood. The menu also caters to vegetarians. Patrons have the option to customise their toppings and spice level.

» Cost for two ₹800

Ellora in the Gulf

☒ DUBAI

Michelin Star chef Vikas Khanna launched his new restaurant 'Ellora By Vikas Khanna' at the JA Beach Hotel, Dubai, and it's all set to replace his signature restaurant 'Kinara by Vikas Khanna'. The latter will remain temporarily closed. This collaboration with the UAE-based hospitality giant is being labelled as a 'seasonal culinary experience', inspired by the traditional flavours of India. The latest venture is all about rustic, earthy flavours and offers a gourmet experience. The new menu will feature seasonal star ingredients like green mango, passionfruit and watermelon.

» reservation@jaresorts.com

Gujarati **Undhiyu**

It is no surprise that Gujaratis are known for their love for travel and exceptional quest for food. With something to please everyone's palate, the state lives up to the proverb 'variety is the spice of life'. Unlike other Indian cuisines, where spices play a dominant role, Gujarati cuisine is known for its subtlety. An eclectic blend of flavours, the crown jewel of a Gujarati thali, *undhiyu* is the ultimate miscellany of vegetables. The dish derives its name from the Gujarati word 'undhu' meaning inverse, owing to its preparation in an inverted clay pot. Cooked to perfection on a gentle flame, it is best enjoyed with puri and *aamras*.

This traditional Gujarati curry is an absolute must-have during festivals

Undhiyu is extremely popular along the coastline in Surat, Navsari and Valsad.

This seasonal curry is prepared upside down underground in earthen pots called *matlu*.

RECIPE FOR SURTI UNDHIYU

- For the *muthias*, soak fenugreek leaves in water with a pinch of salt
- Add 1/4 cup whole wheat flour, gram flour, 1 tsp chilli powder, 2 1/2 tsp ginger and green chilli paste, 1/4 tsp turmeric powder, sugar, baking soda, 1 1/2 tsp olive oil and water
- Knead this mixture into a dough. Divide into equal parts and roll them into balls
- Fry the *muthias* in a *kadhai* till golden brown
- Take 1/2 cup peeled baby potatoes, an unripe banana, 2 eggplants and make a vertical slit
- Prepare a coconut-coriander masala by adding chilli powder, sugar, grated coconut, coriander leaves, green garlic, cumin and coriander powder, green chilli and ginger paste and salt
- Mix well and use it to fill the slits
- In a large bowl prepare a mixture of Surti *vaal*, yam, *tuver* dal and the remaining coconut-coriander masala
- Heat oil in a pressure cooker, add 1/4 tbsp carom seeds and sauté until they crackle. Add a pinch of asafoetida, baking soda and potatoes and eggplants
- Cover it with the lid and let the vegetables cook*
- Add the bananas and fried *muthias* and cook till the bananas are tender. Stir occasionally
- Garnish with coriander leaves

* Switch off after two whistles and allow the steam to release

TRAVEL MENU
76

The French **Connection**

Paul Bocuse

THE INTERMINABLE LOCKDOWNS and work from homes have spawned myriad chefs all over the world. Social media is flooded with pictures of delicacies prepared by these budding chefs. Getting your cookbook out, and dishing up something fancy is a great way to beat the lockdown blues, nevermind the waistline. Just like visual and performing artists need an appreciative audience, food artists need connoisseur patrons. Not being blessed by the muse either in performing or culinary arts, I try to redeem myself by being a good patron. The problem these days is, it is much harder to beat the blues by the memory of comfort food. Be that as it may, that is what I must do—remember good food times, and derive my comfort from that warm memory.

Every culture celebrates its food with enthusiasm and vigour. Actually, food is culture. I sometimes get the opportunity to take out some time during my travels, from my work engagements, and sample what the host state or country has to offer. My only (some might say, huge) limitation is that I am a 'pure vegetarian', which limits my sampling to a large extent. Folks, everywhere that I have been in the world, have made special efforts to tweak their native cuisine offering to accommodate my food preferences. Purists may laugh at me, saying I have not tasted the real thing. Maybe so. But I have succeeded in accumulating a treasure trove of memories, both for my taste buds, and my affable soul.

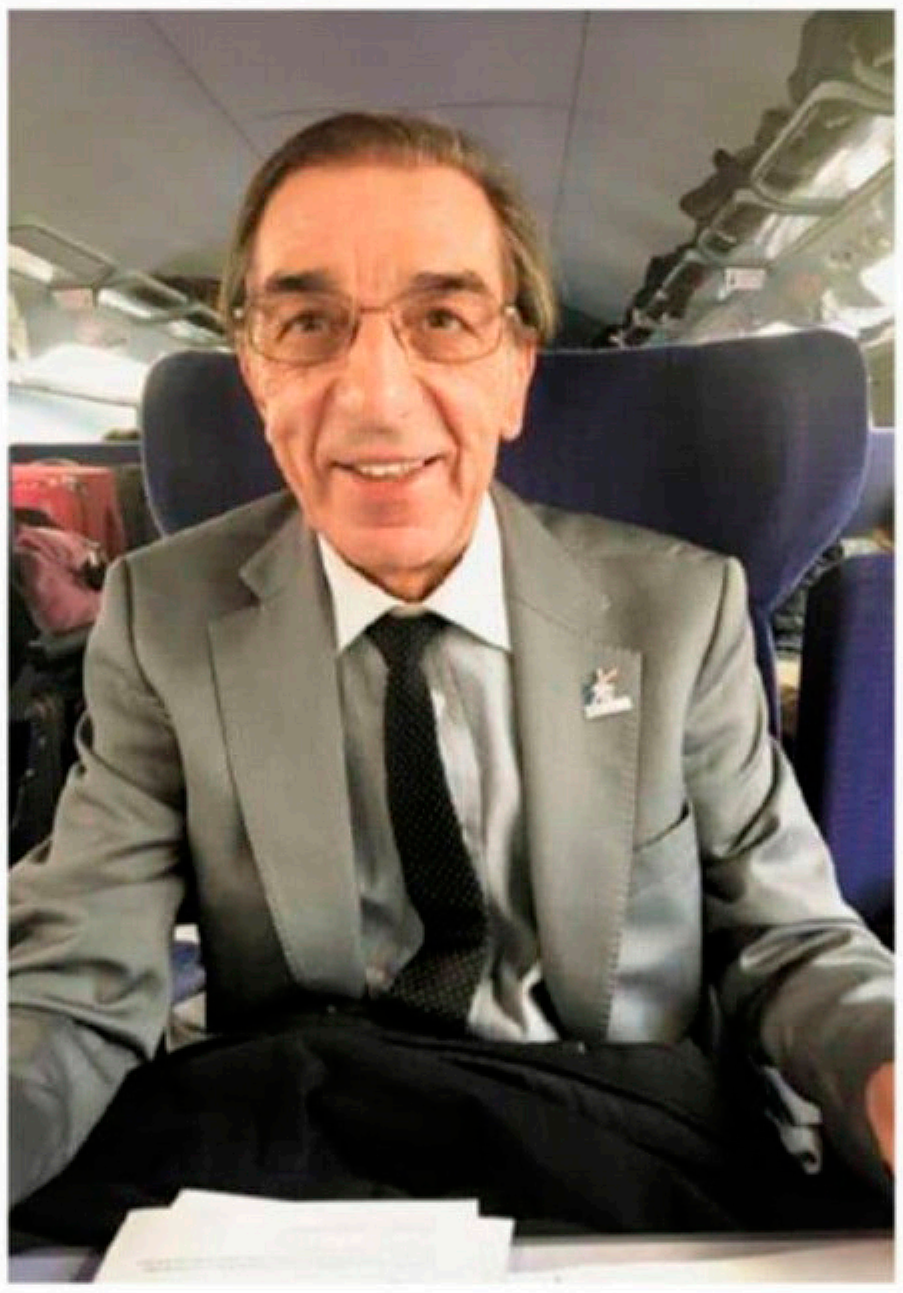
One such sweet memory is from a trip to France a couple of years ago. We were on a learning trip, understanding the institutional and regulatory system for food safety. Every meal that was offered clearly showed the effort that had gone into serving a balance of tastes to the not-so-adventurous Indians. After all, cooked and presented the way the French do it, the humble eggplant assumes the epicurean stature of the Ratatouille!

↓ Chef Tetedoie at work

*** The cuisine created by Chef Tetedoie is inspired by regional produce and is rooted in tradition**

The icing on the macaroon was a brief visit to the city of Lyon. The historical city was a visual delight. We were treated to a dinner made and presented beautifully by celebrated chef Christian Tetedoie. While his signature dishes involved lobsters and heads of calves, I was happy with the asparagus and mushroom creation he artfully presented as our entrée. The restaurant itself was perched on a hill, and provided a magnificent view of the entire city at night. The chef's fame was such that the 'gastronomique' restaurant itself was named 'Tetedoie'. The greatest indulgence of the evening for us was the chef himself, who came and chatted with us. He mourned the loss of his guide and mentor, Paul. He searched my face when he mentioned the

↓ Layered Ratatouille



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↑ Chef Tetedoie's signature lobster is exquisite

↓ Perched on Fouvière Hill, 'Tetedoie' is a vantage point

↑ Fellow traveller on the way back to Paris after visiting Bocuse's funeral

name. I expressed my condolences, but had the sneaky feeling that I am supposed to know of Paul, and about Paul, and I am just not getting it.

The next day, after our official engagements were over, we rushed to the train station, our host urging us to make haste, as the town was shut due to the demise of some celebrity. We managed to catch the train, just in time. After I settled down in my seat, I courteously nodded at my neighbour. He was a distinguished gentleman, dressed in a flamboyant grey suit of the highest quality. His leather-trimmed fedora, resting casually on his knee, and his checkered green scarf seemed to have been homed, recently until then, in a high end store on the Champs-Élysées. As the train sped smoothly towards Paris, we struck up a conversation. He was in Lyon, he told me, to attend the funeral of the celebrity chef, Paul Bocuse. "Ah! Tetedoie's Paul," I realised. "Are you in the food business yourself?" I asked. "No," he replied, a little taken aback. Turned out, he was a successful businessman.

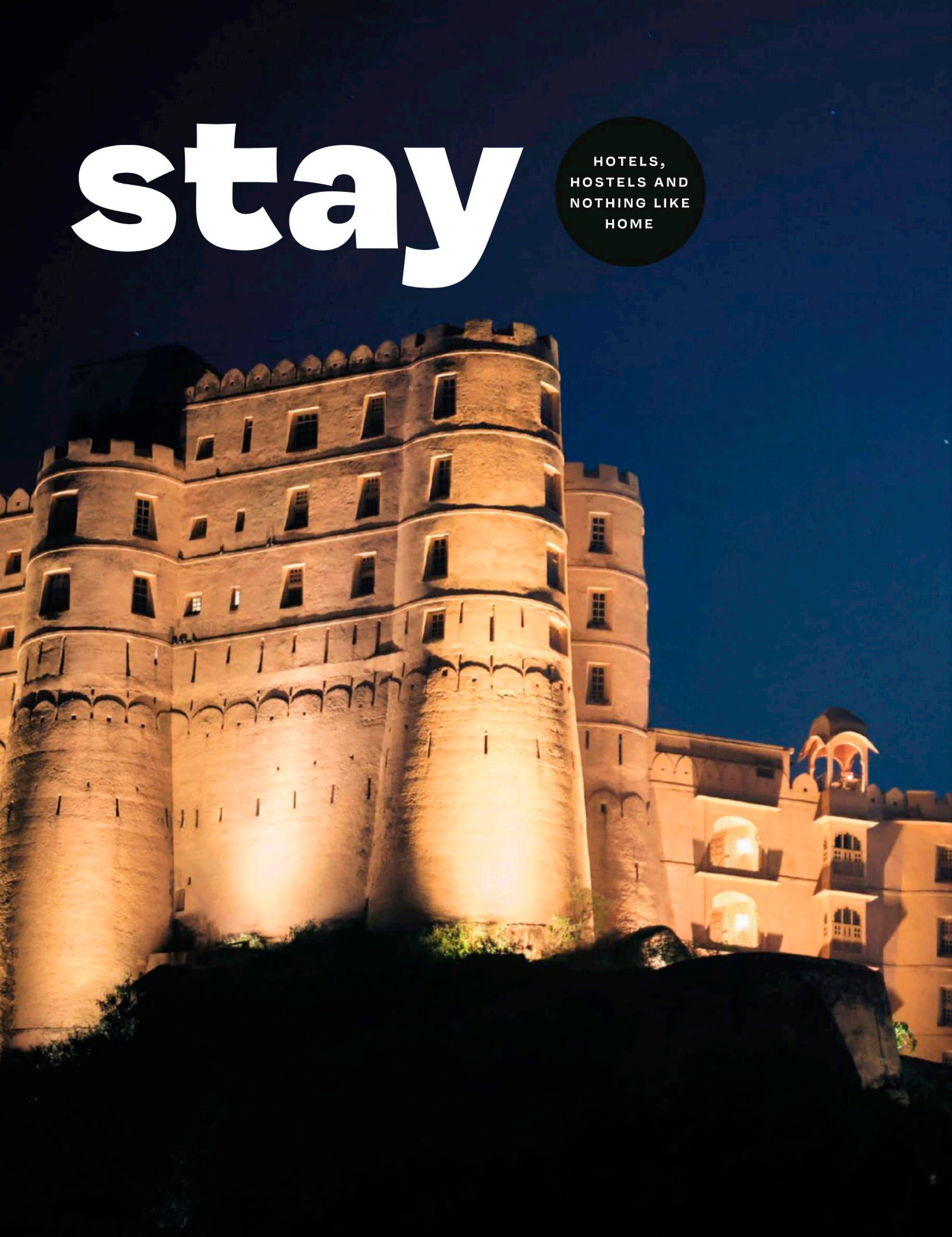
My neighbour pointed to the colourful pin he was sporting on his lapel. The pin had the figure of the chef himself and the French colours on a banner in the backdrop. By now, I was intrigued. I asked him if Bocuse could be the same person who Tetedoie was alluding to. Of course, he said, the whole nation is in mourning. The whole country was mourning the passing away of a chef? He then handed me a small booklet. It was the schedule of the funeral service of Paul Bocuse, with an obituary published by the Unesco, with tributes from heads of states, distinguished personalities from all walks of life, and chefs from all over the world. I realised that our visit coincided with a truly momentous occasion in French history. The restaurant where he exhibited his art, and the culinary institute founded by him serve as a pilgrimage site for lovers of food from all over the world.

I left the country with a deep appreciation for a culture where food, and its creators are accorded the same reverence and appreciation as those in the performing and visual arts. To be celebrated, replicated with due credit, not plagiarised, and cherished for generations.

—PALLAVI GOYAL

stay

HOTELS, HOSTELS AND NOTHING LIKE HOME



*Long after being abandoned to ruin and vandalism, the fort was eventually restored to its former glory, and beyond, in a remarkable transformation that took almost 10 years to plan and complete. Alila Fort Bishangarh, with 59 stately rooms and suites, was fully opened in July 2019.

NIRAAMAYA RETREATS 81
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SUMAN NANAIAH 83

LUXURY ON The Rocks

Just six kilometres off the Delhi-Jaipur Highway, Alila Fort Bishangarh is easily accessible—while offering all the isolation we need currently. The heritage property reopens September 30

BISHANGARH, RAJASTHAN

Social distancing comes naturally to me. As an introvert, I've practiced it all my life. That's why, on my birthday this year—this was just before the lockdown—I found myself enjoying the blissful seclusion that only a 230-year-old war fort in Rajasthan can provide. Writing about it in a world that has changed, perhaps forever, I can tell the property will thrive.

Before Alila Fort Bishangarh, all the forts I'd stayed in had belonged decidedly to the 'heritage' category. You know what I mean; old and impressive, but a little squidgy around the edges. While Bishangarh is as authentic as they come, it's also a notch above: very plush, with no mod cons missing. It's an impressive fort, rising like a tall confection above its surroundings, and lurches into view well before you reach it.

On arrival, there's a canopied reception pavilion below the fort, surrounded by soothing water features. From here you have the option of walking up (I'd suggest you leave it for later, when you're rested) or being driven to the fort and your rooms.

The rooms are 'heritage chic', extremely stylish. Luxuriating in their sprawling embrace, who would think this was once a war fort, meant as a lookout for armies approaching Jaipur from the north. When battles were fought at nearby Amarsar, the fort served as a watch, providing advance warning of invaders. Many parts of it remain rugged and unfinished, reminders of its military past. The lovingly reconstructed residential parts are truly royal, a faithful recreation of the flavours of Shahpura royalty.

If the fort is a sight to behold, the views from it are equally stunning. Especially from Nazaara, the open-air restaurant on top, which is all about the view and dining under the stars. The cuisine at this restaurant is local and seasonal, featuring Shekhawat and Bishangarh specialities. The restaurant also serves hunter cuisine, which

Outlook traveller
APPROVED

Rajasthan is famed for, featuring live sandpit and fire-pit cooking in mud pots. I visited in winter, so quilts were provided to counter the chilly, gale-force winds.

The meals at Fort Bishangarh, without exception, are superlative, much of the produce coming from their own extensive kitchen gardens. Unsurprisingly, my most memorable meal was lunch at the farm under a tree, preceded by a tour of the organic garden. The meal, which began with a simple bhuna aloo chaat, moved on to interesting *rotlas* and curries, all to be washed down with buttermilk in brass tumblers. A repast rustic and sophisticated in equal measure.

The luxurious pleasures of Bishangarh are guilt free, as the property has a deep commitment to sustainability. The restoration, which took several years, made use of traditional Rajasthani construction techniques and local stone, combined with the newest architectural trends to create a comfortable environment, but with a sense of place.

Operationally too, the environmental impact has been contained. According to the property: "Our commitments include minimising greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption and pollution; an in-house waste recycling programme; the use of indigenous low-water-use plants; as well as a wastewater management system that recycles wastewater for irrigation making us trailblazers among eco-friendly hotels in India." The passive solar design of the buildings and the active solar systems for water heating further the resort's goal of a minimal carbon footprint. Inside the fort, rocks are integrated into the walls and roof to improve insulation. Beyond environmental responsibilities, Fort Bishangarh also supports the local community.

Experiences offered here include interactions with local artisans, walks in the Aravali hills, camel cart rides and riverbed horse riding. And they make the perfect cup of Americano. That pretty much seals it for me.

–AMIT DIXIT

☒ **KERALA**

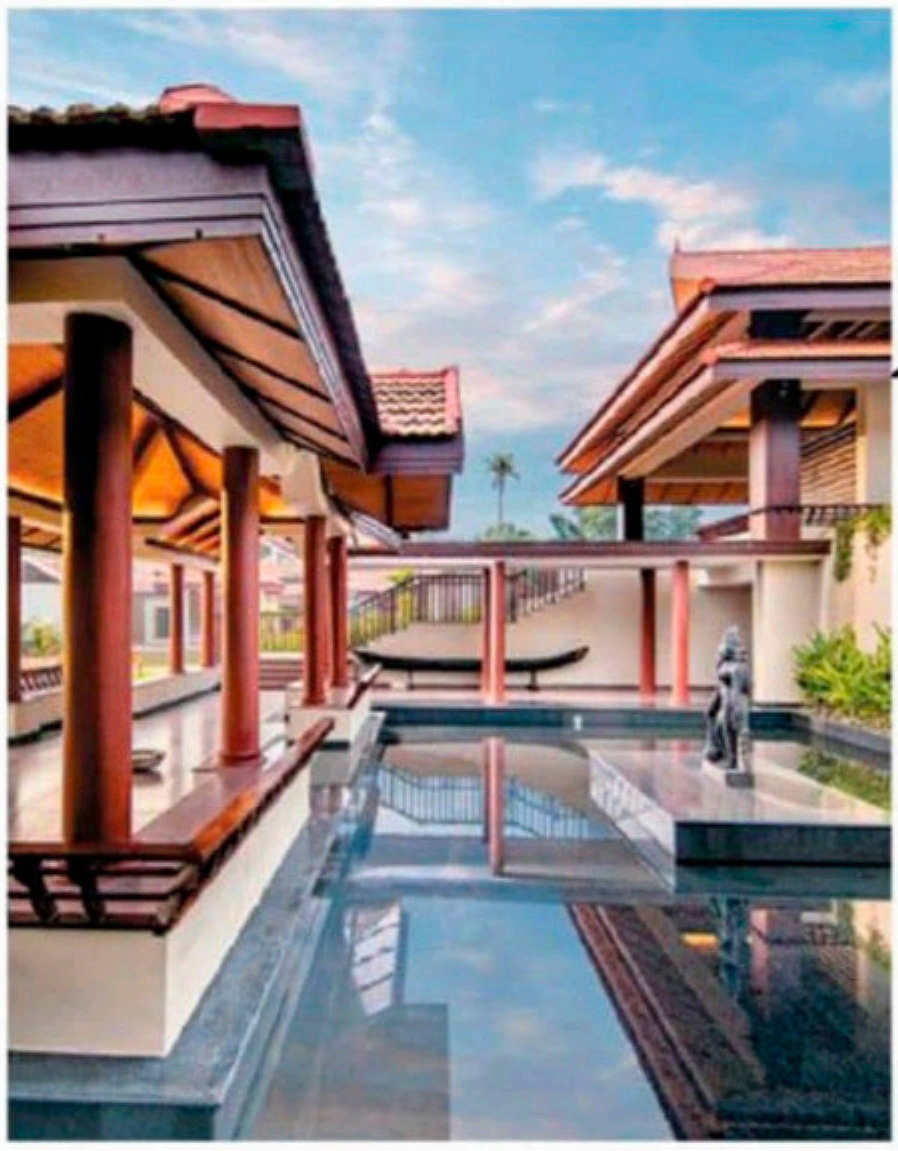
Niraamaya

RETREATS BACKWATERS & BEYOND

Kumarakom, 74kms (2 hours) from Cochin International Airport
» 27 luxury villas

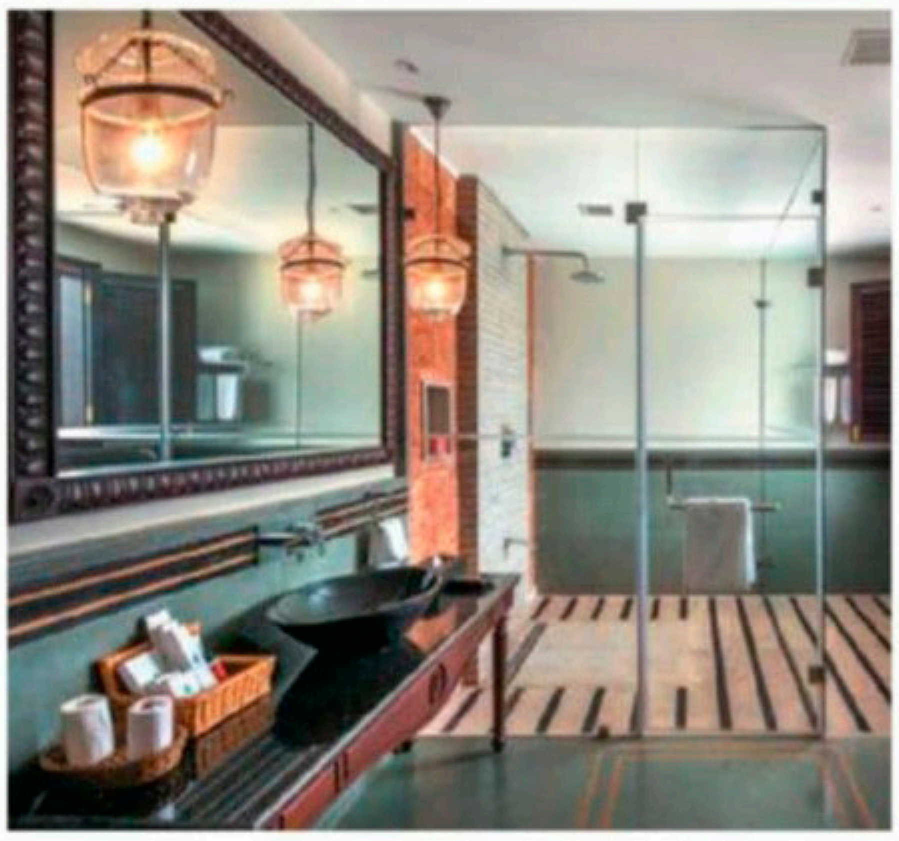
SOJOURN » The waterfront retreat lies on the banks of Lake Vembanad, amid breezy coconut palms and tropical foliage.

INDULGE » The all-day dining café, Samsara, serves authentic Kuttanad cuisine along with fresh made-to-order breakfast.



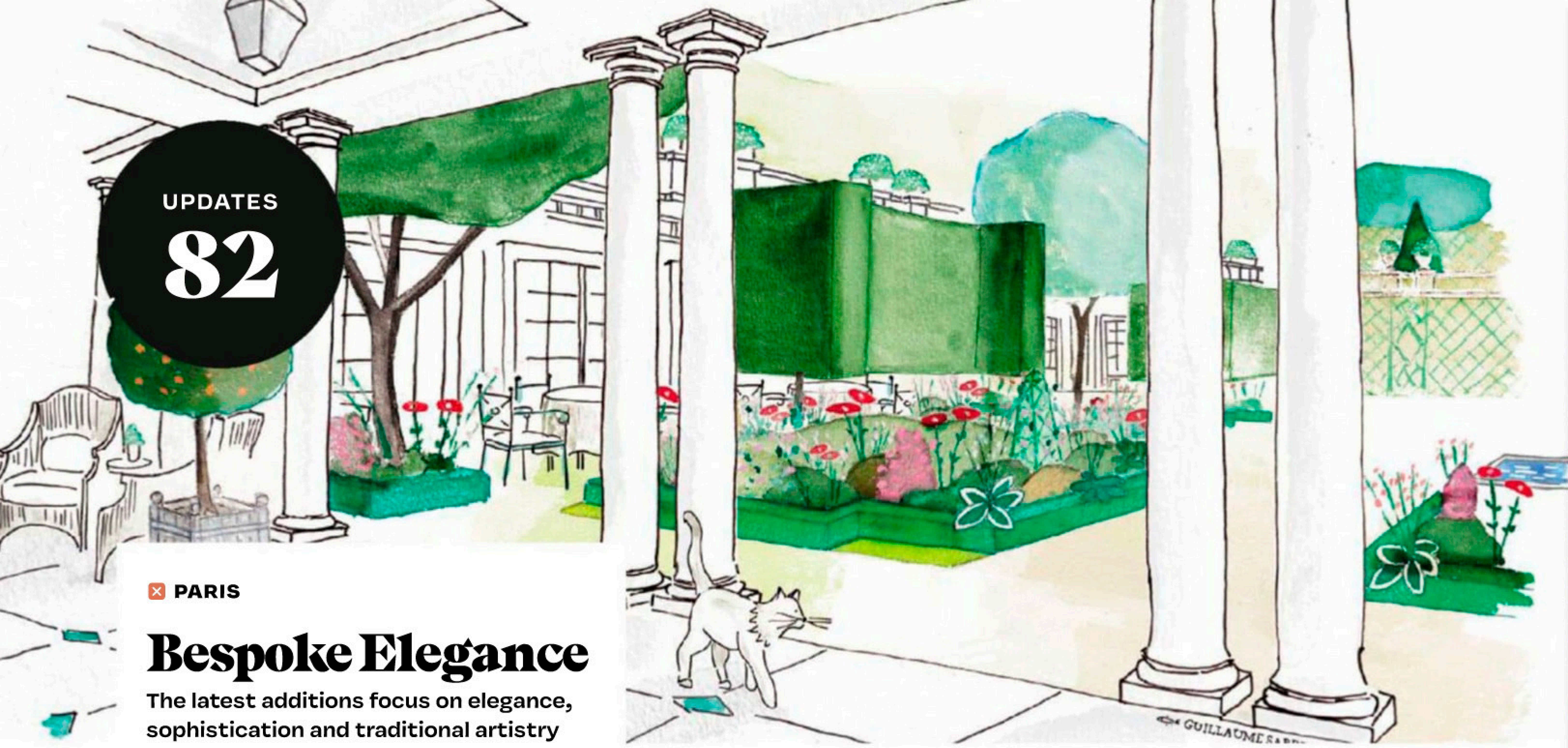
UNWIND » The spa's wellness offerings include traditional Ayurveda therapies as well as tailored immersions and yoga.

REJUVENATE » The plush villas offer stunning vistas of the backwaters with amenities such as open-air baths and private balconies.



Escape

Take a boat trip in the **Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary**, a 5-minute drive from the property, and spot birds ranging from the Himalaya to Siberia.



PARIS

Bespoke Elegance

The latest additions focus on elegance, sophistication and traditional artistry

Le Bristol Paris now has a contemporary touch to its rooms and suites. The refurbishments range from embroiled draperies at the French doors, to an en suite private bar, naturally illuminated walk-in closet and a private outdoor spa. This marks the completion of the property's multi-phase renewal. The renovated garden with plush drawing rooms and a colonnade with blossoming orange trees, focuses on environmental consciousness and sustainability.

» The property reopened on September 1 • Located near the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré

KOLKATA

Expansion Spree

The hospitality giant will begin operations in India in 2022

Thailand-based Dusit International will venture into the Indian market with Dusit Princess Serviced Suites Kolkata. The property will comprise 42 three-bedroom units, a swimming pool and an all-day dining restaurant amid other facilities. The planned expansion includes exquisite palace conversions with an aim to combine Thai-inspired hospitality with local customs and traditions to deliver sustainable values.

» 300 hotels, under six brands across 14 countries worldwide

DELHI

FRESH SHEET

Hotels in non-containment zones to resume services

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority gave a nod to hotels in Delhi to resume functions. Properties have aligned their health and safety protocols with government guidelines, along with stringent sanitisation measures in place. In lieu of the improving COVID-19 situation in Delhi, hotels which were earlier linked to COVID-19 hospitals are no longer so.

» Hotels in containment zones are currently excluded

MYSURU

Meet The General Manager

ROYAL ORCHID HOTELS MYSURU'S SUMAN NANAIAH

Embracing challenges as they come, Suman Nanaiah prides herself in curating out-of-the box personalised experiences for her guests. She started her career in 1996 and is now the Area General Manager of the Royal Orchid Group of Hotels in Mysuru.

Hailing from a family of coffee planters from Coorg, she embraced hospitality early on as a part of her culture. Crediting the same for her successful career in the industry, Suman has never looked back. Apart from involving her team in challenging projects, she also strives to recognise each team member's strengths and weaknesses, and aims to help them streamline their efforts to achieve their goals. Keeping a sharp focus on the inputs provided by her team and taking into consideration their feedback, she is also a thorough decision maker. On days she is not busy tending to guests, she can be found in the jungles of South India with her son tracking big cats or pampering her taste buds while spending time with her family.

–SIMRAN GILL

*** What was your first hospitality job and at what age?**
Guest Service Associate at 26.

*** How would you describe your personal leadership style?**
Integrity, clear communication, goal-setting and employee motivation.

*** One drink/dish travellers should not miss at The Metropole?**
Our wide variety of succulent kebabs at the Tiger Trail Restaurant. If looking for a combination then the *achari* murgh tikka with our in-house cocktail, Caipirojka.

*** What steps is the property taking to ensure sustainability?**
Staff retention, recycling and waste reduction management, sourcing local and fresh seasonal produce, and energy and water conservation.

*** Any particularly funny incident you recall with the guests?**
Once we arranged a wedding at the hotel and were informed that a VIP guest would arrive. We were told to ensure the grandest welcome, putting me and the entire team on our toes. Little did we know that the VIP guest was the groom's best man at the wedding–Mirchi, his beagle, who travelled in his chauffeur driven car all the way from Mumbai.

*** Any strategic change that you implemented owing to the COVID-19 pandemic?**
The foremost was staying connected with our guests through various digital channels and offering stress-free cancellation policies. We also enhanced our operational protocols by working closely with all local government health authorities.

*** If not hospitality, what was your second career choice?**
Animal rescue and welfare sector.

back

LITTLE THINGS TO FILL IN YOUR JOURNEY

— BOOKS —

Every Creature Has A Story

Exploring the quirks of the wild

Travel Classic

William Dalrymple's journey through the history of Delhi

India: The World Vegetarian

Roopa Gulati's celebration of traditional, vegetarian cooking

— HOW TO —

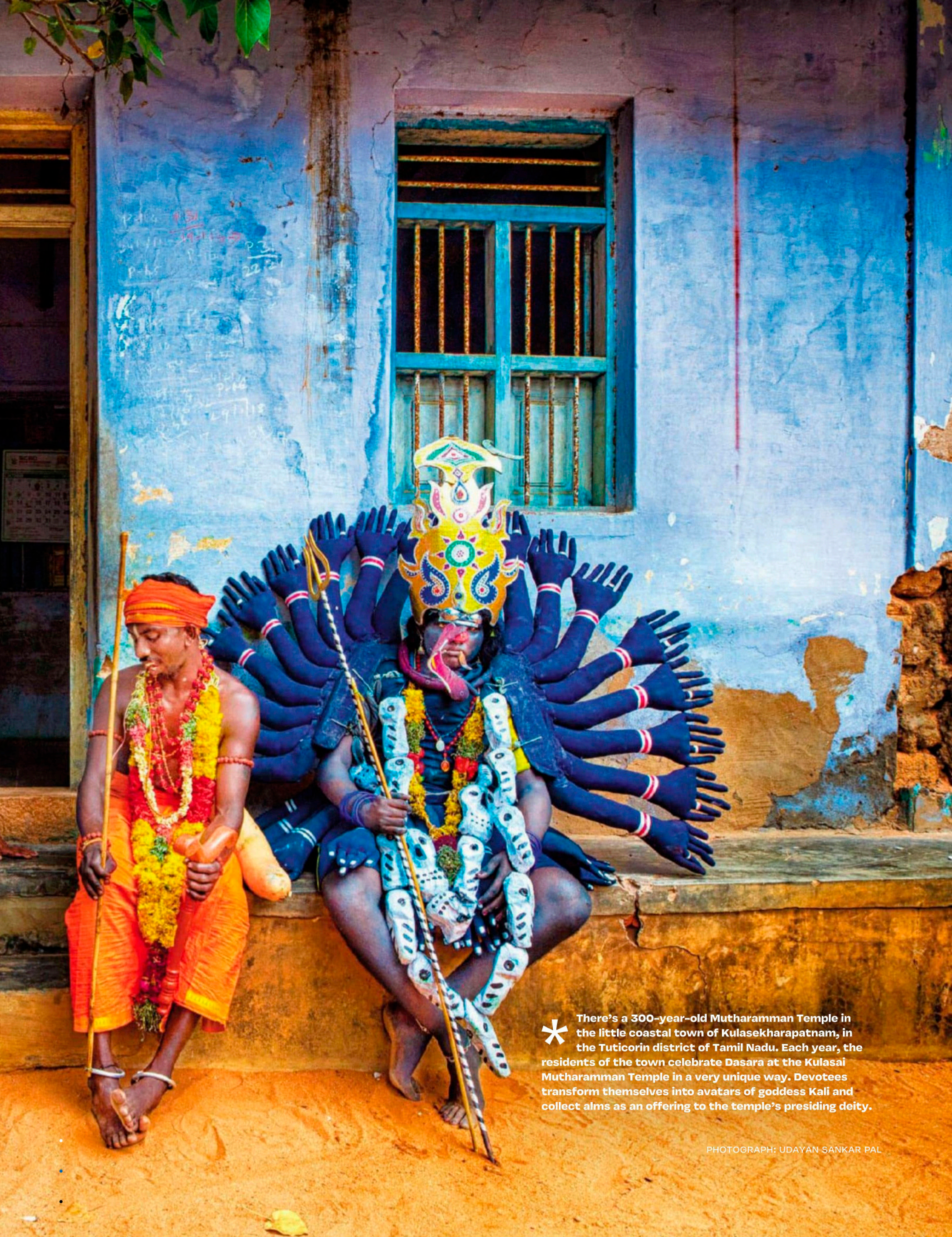
Roadtrip

Tips on how to prep for a hassle-free adventure

— GEAR —

Printers, lamps and lounge wear

The monthly roundup



* There's a 300-year-old Mutharamman Temple in the little coastal town of Kulasekharapatnam, in the Tuticorin district of Tamil Nadu. Each year, the residents of the town celebrate Dasara at the Kulasai Mutharamman Temple in a very unique way. Devotees transform themselves into avatars of goddess Kali and collect alms as an offering to the temple's presiding deity.

PHOTOGRAPH: UDAYAN SANKAR PAL

BOOK REVIEWS

86

The Ways of the World

What Science Reveals About Animal Behaviour
Every Creature Has a Story
JANAKI LENIN

EVERY CREATURE HAS A STORY
by **JANAKI LENIN**
HARPER COLLINS INDIA ₹599

EVERYBODY LOVES a fun book. And fun in a weird way. Like a compendium of the grossest fetishes normal people have. Or the coupling (or tripling) positions that we never knew our more primitive ancestors to have tried. Or the daily objects that you come in intimate contact with that have more microbes than your toilet seat.

None of these books presumably exist, but Janaki Lenin's *Every Creature Has a Story* does. No, it's not just gross things, though it does concern glassfrogs peeing on their eggs and spiders and octopuses engaging in wild—even mortal—sex. It's a relief to slowly realise that human standards of weird don't mean much in the larger, delightfully complex animal world. That anthropomorphic systems and binaries of civilisation collapse in favour of altogether new hierarchies in the minuter lifeforms.

Lenin, who is a veteran of the genre, writes with both amusement and adoration about dragonflies that fake being dead to opt out of sex and African wild dogs that bark to reach a consensus on whether to hunt or nap. The book, culled from a batch of 90 essays from her online column, is a 101 of sorts, to the vastness and the wondrous inscrutability of the animal world.

Some of the explorations that Lenin undertakes touch upon questions that have reached an unprecedented pertinence in our present lives. Perhaps the conjecture that bees are born vaccinated could kindle hope for the coming times? That chimpanzees mourn for their dead could reassure our existential crisis-stricken selves? Perhaps we could learn empathy from prairie voles—who, also known to be monogamous life-long, might soon outstrip humans in the spectrum of consciousness.

Lenin, who is a veteran of the genre, writes with both amusement and adoration about dragonflies that fake being dead to opt out of sex and African wild dogs that bark to reach a consensus on whether to hunt or to nap

If you're the kind of person that grew up on a steady diet of *Animal Planet,* the memories will come rushing back. You'll be dreaming about soaring in the sky—much like frigate birds bound for distant land and taking mid-flight naps. It will be worth risking triggering your cetaphobia—you might even have nightmares about killer whales, sinking ships or firehawks arsoning the forests of Australia.

Fun comes at a cost.

—PRANNAY PATHAK

City of Djinns

by **WILLIAM DALRYMPLE**

When people talk about the magic of a city, hyperbole seems to be the running theme. But when it comes to the enigmatic city of Delhi, there simply has to be a driving force behind its rich, and rather violent, history. In his timeless travelogue, *City of Djinns*, William Dalrymple gives a—if not factual, definitely romantic—explanation, of sorts.

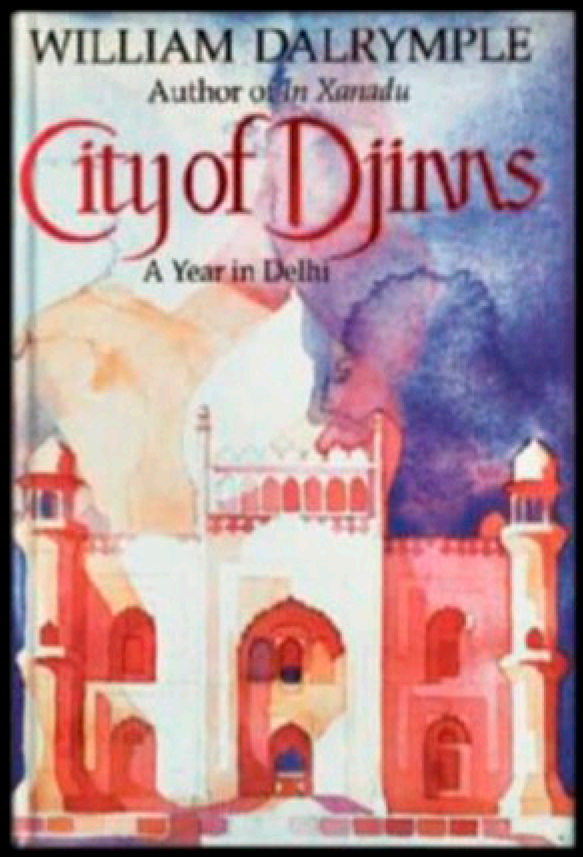
Dalrymple met his first Sufi—Pir Sadr-ud-Din—in the citadel of Feroz Shah Kotla, who told him about the city's magic. "Delhi," wrote Dalrymple, "was a city of djinns."

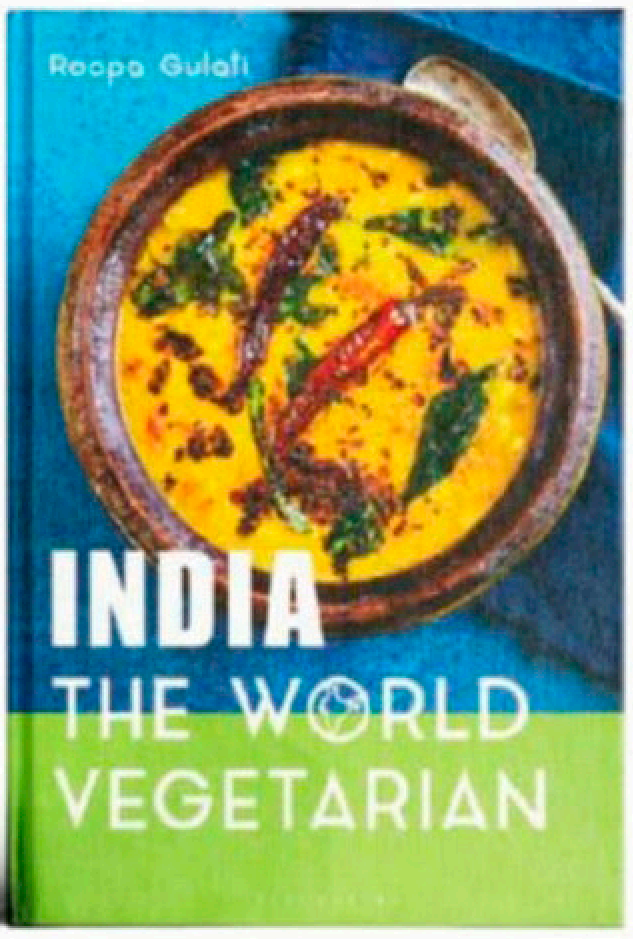
"Though it had been burned by invaders time and time again, millennium after millennium, still the city was rebuilt; each time it rose like a phoenix from the fire."

Dalrymple peels back Delhi's layers of history like an onion. He starts with the Sikh riots of 1984, through the partition, the British, Mughals, the Sultanate, all the way to the Pandavas' Indraprastha, weaving in his own experiences along the way. He makes you fall in and out of love with the city but never ignores the mysticism surrounding it.

"You could not see them," he wrote of the djinns. "But if you concentrated, you'd feel them; hear their whisperings, and even sense their warm breath on your face."

» BLOOMSBURY ₹499





India: The World Vegetarian

by **ROOPA GULATI**
BLOOMSBURY ₹899

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN WARY of what I call the 'NRI cookbook', reeking of nostalgia for the mother country, happy to perpetuate the myth of the exotic Orient, overly reliant on the restaurant-style dishes that have unfortunately become the face of Indian food around the world, and a veritable minefield of factual inaccuracies and cultural boo-boos. Yup, I don't like them. Thankfully, Roopa Gulati's latest book—sensible, practical and rooted in reality—is quite a far cry from all of that.

Older readers may remember Roopa Gulati as the once-upon-a-time bubbly anchor of the cookery segment on NDTV's *Good Morning India* show. She grew up in Cumbria, honed her culinary skills at the Cordon Bleu Cookery School in London, then spent some years in India where she worked as a consultant for Taj Hotels and did the TV show, eventually moving back to the UK. Gulati has developed a lot of culinary shows since, including *Rick Stein's India*.

Part of a series on national vegetarian cuisines around the globe, *India: The World Vegetarian* has eye-catching photographs that look good enough to eat. They are by David Loftus, who is something of a legend in the world of food photography. Even Jamie Oliver swears by him.

The recipes themselves are sane and clutter-free, pared down to the essentials. And they've clearly been tested. Innovative and often personal, they've been gathered from trusted sources over the years. But Gulati makes them her own with little twists and touches, and her wealth of culinary experience. We call it *andaz*, an amorphous measure of measure, which will be familiar to Indian cooks but is almost impossible to translate.

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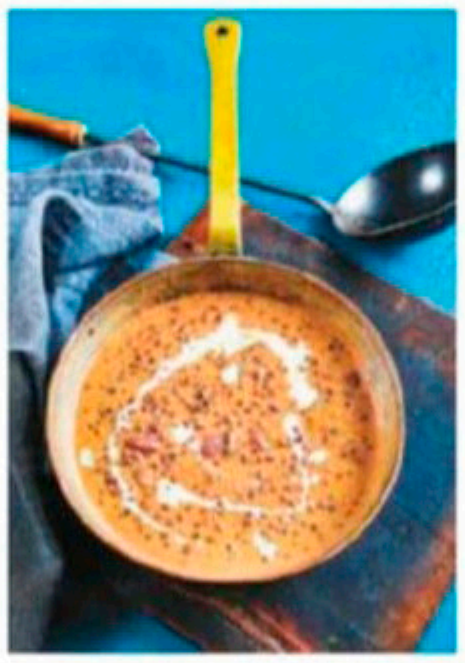


The dishes featured range from heart-warming home standards like dal makhani and palak paneer to the more cheffy spinach and fig *tikkis* (this one is courtesy Karunesh Khanna, head chef at Tamarind in London) or the red chilli-stuffed mushrooms. Even loftier are the bulgur wheat and cardamom *tikkis* with their creamy saffron filling, straight out of the decadence of a Mughal palace kitchen. When you least expect it, you run into Punjabi *anda bhurji* or that classic—chilli cheese toast—so emblematic of how India deftly absorbs eclectic influences into its (in this case, quite literally) melting pot. It's this high and low approach that lends the book a sing-song quality, a cadence of its own. We could call it Raga Roopa, I suppose.

Full marks for a fair, pan-Indian distribution to the selection. This must have been a challenge, given that Indian cuisine, even just its vegetarian aspect, is quite impossible to encompass in a single volume of any size. Additionally, there are bunches of useful tips, like how to go about making your own Indian spice mixes (always better than store bought, and fresher) and even on making the perfect portion of basmati rice or your own homemade paneer.

I'm so, so glad this did not turn out to be the NRI cookbook of my nightmares. And I intend to make good use of it in my kitchen. Fellow diners, beware.

—AMIT DIXIT

GEARBOX

September Picks

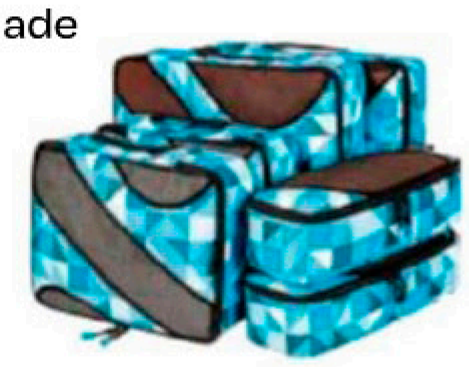
packing cubes, lanterns, and mini printers, if you're hitting the road, don't forget to take these essentials!

→ Underworld.co Tee+Short

This T-shirt and booty shorts set is 100 per cent cotton, bio washed, and cured to be the softest day or night lounge wear. But nothing beats the quirky designs!

» From ₹1,300 • theunderworld.co

→ Bagail Packing Cubes



The set of six cubes comes in different vibrant colours and convenient sizes. Made with high-quality fabric and a mesh panel on top, they are built to last.

» From $24.99 • bagail.com

Kiko Milano Konscious Vegan Collection

- ☒ cruelty free and vegan, from the product to the packaging
- ☒ aimed at creating minimum impact on the environment
- ☒ formulated with minimal ingredients
- ☒ includes BB mousse, matte powder, lipsticks, and mascara, etc

» Products starting from ₹900 • kikocosmetics.com

↑ Sun Glow Solar Mini LED Lantern

Fit this nifty little solar lantern with a Li-Ion battery into your backpack and hit the road. The LEDs use 5W of solar power and can last four to five hours.

» From ₹450 • sunglowsolar.com

↑ Pennline Personalisable Notebooks

Pocket-sized notebooks with Italian leatherette covers, they come with bright laser-etched artwork, and any writing of your choice. You can customise it to fit your own, unique quirks!

» From ₹450 • williampenn.net

↑ Lexon Mina Mini LED Lamp

This adorable little mushroom fits in the palm of your hand. With two light settings, warm and cold, the compact size and stylish design also come with a dimming feature.

» From ₹2,500 • williampenn.net

← Fujifilm Instax Mini Link Phone Printer

- ☒ phone connects via Bluetooth
- ☒ can print video frames
- ☒ comes with a dedicated app
- ☒ works with Fujifilm cameras
- ☒ "surprise mode" for party pics

» Comes in Dusty Pink, Ash White and Denim Blue; from ₹9,999 • amazon.in

Get Road Trippin'

When you're all set to go off on your great road adventure, know that we've got you covered

Wheels in check?

☐ Car servicing
☐ Registration
☐ Insurance
☐ Stepney
☐ Toolbox
☐ Tank up
☐ Spare container for gas
☐ Car manual
☐ Jumper cables
☐ Windscreen cover
☐ Tyre pressure
☐ Road Side Assistance (RSA)

Clothing Hack

Use packing cubes to segregate your belongings for easy access. Roll your clothes to fit more in a tighter space. Pack your belongings in categories so you don't have to unpack your whole bag trying to find that buried sock.

Munchies

Carry lots of water, and then some more. Dry snacks are a great idea, and don't forget your mugs, plates, cutlery and glasses. Keep a garbage bag handy so that you don't leave a trail of trash behind you.

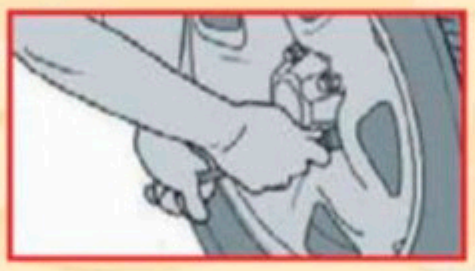
Camping Gear

☒ Foldable tent
☒ Stove
☒ Gas can
☒ Lighter
☒ Cooler
☒ Camping table and chairs
☒ Washing line and pegs
☒ Hiking boots

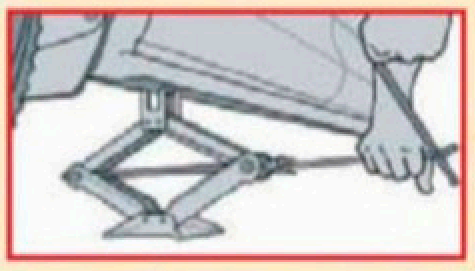
Don't Forget

Flashlights, portable charger, sanitiser, blankets, umbrella, extra towels, bug spray, sunscreen, first-aid kit and travel-sized toiletries.

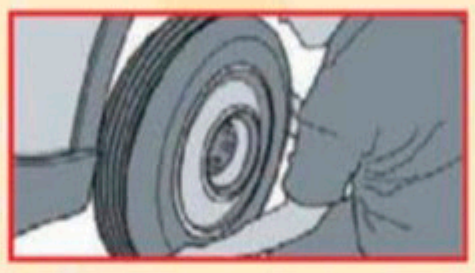
How to change a tyre



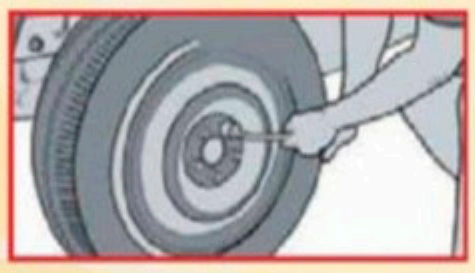
1 Place the spanner on the wheel nuts and stamp down until they're loose enough to turn by hand



2 Put the jack under the car on the rocker panel, raise until the wheel is off the ground



3 Remove the nuts, switch out the flat tyre, put the nuts back on and tighten by hand

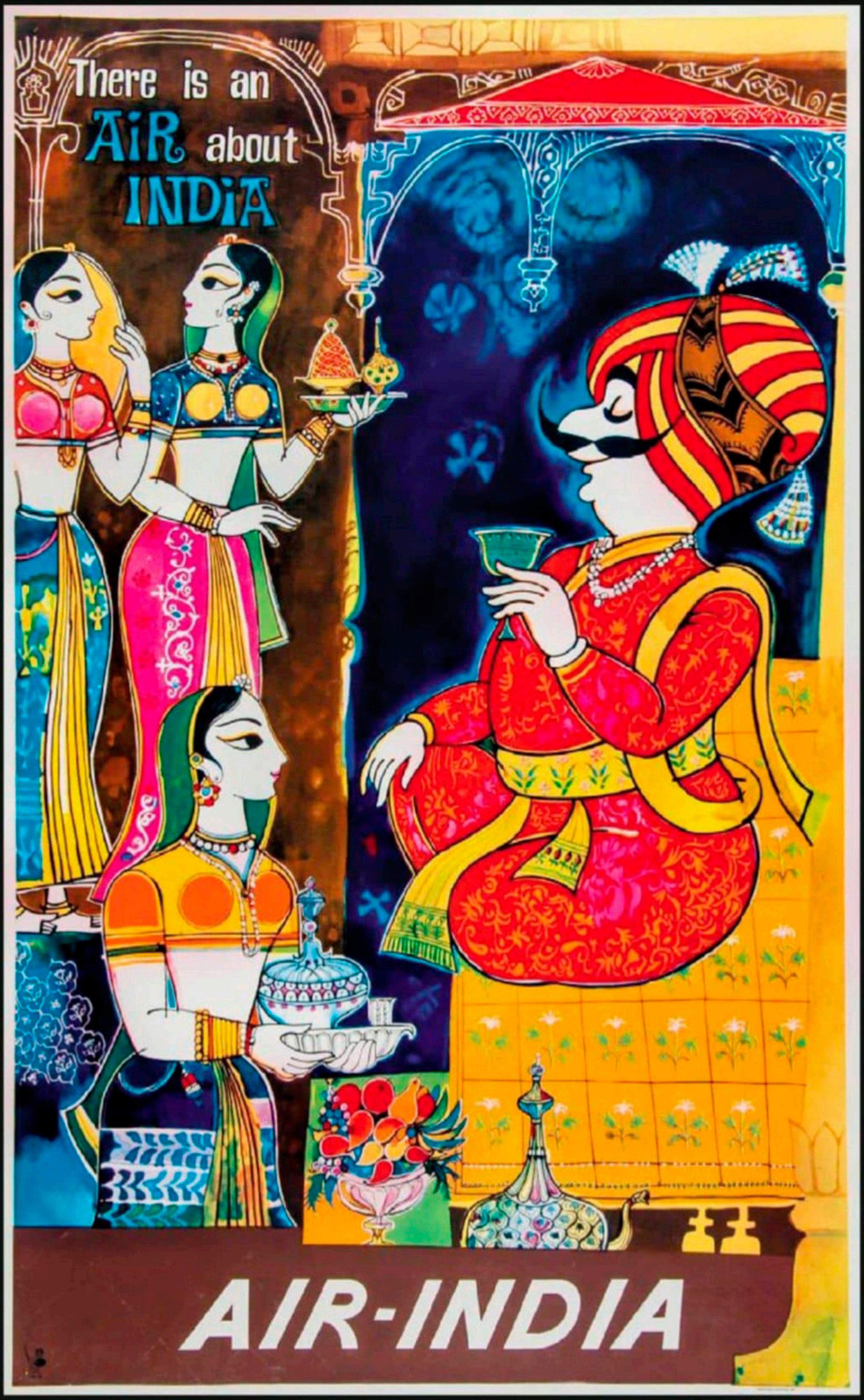


4 Remove the jack and tighten the nuts further with the spanner

Tip: Lefty loosey, righty tighty!

KEEP THIS PAGE HANDY

Compiled by LABANYA MAITRA


There is an AiR about INDiA
AIR-INDIA

India 1966

There's an unlikely alliance between art and Air India. Turns out, the turban-crested, moustache-twirling Maharaja was quite the connoisseur, and the airline has created an attractive collection of Indian art through the years. Jal B. Cowasji, the airline's publicity officer, curated works by established and upcoming artists. He also commissioned students from Mumbai's JJ College of Art to paint murals at the international booking offices. As these artists established themselves, the value of Air India's collection rose.

This vintage poster from the airline's heydays is a reflection of the Maharaja's growing prosperity. Although anatomically skewed to benefit the male gaze, this poster is part of a larger collection showcasing Indian culture in multicultural settings. Perhaps, they just needed a second to get with the swinging '60s.

This year, the 'Maharaja of the Skies' collection was showcased in Mumbai. The man himself, we imagine, would be proudly twirling his enviable 'stache.

—LABANYA MAITRA

www.wildcraft.com/supermasks

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Raste Pahaado se

Aaja re Duniya

Bulave Hardum

Hain Taiyaar Hum!

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PM 2.5

BFE* > 95%

Reusable

Super Breathable

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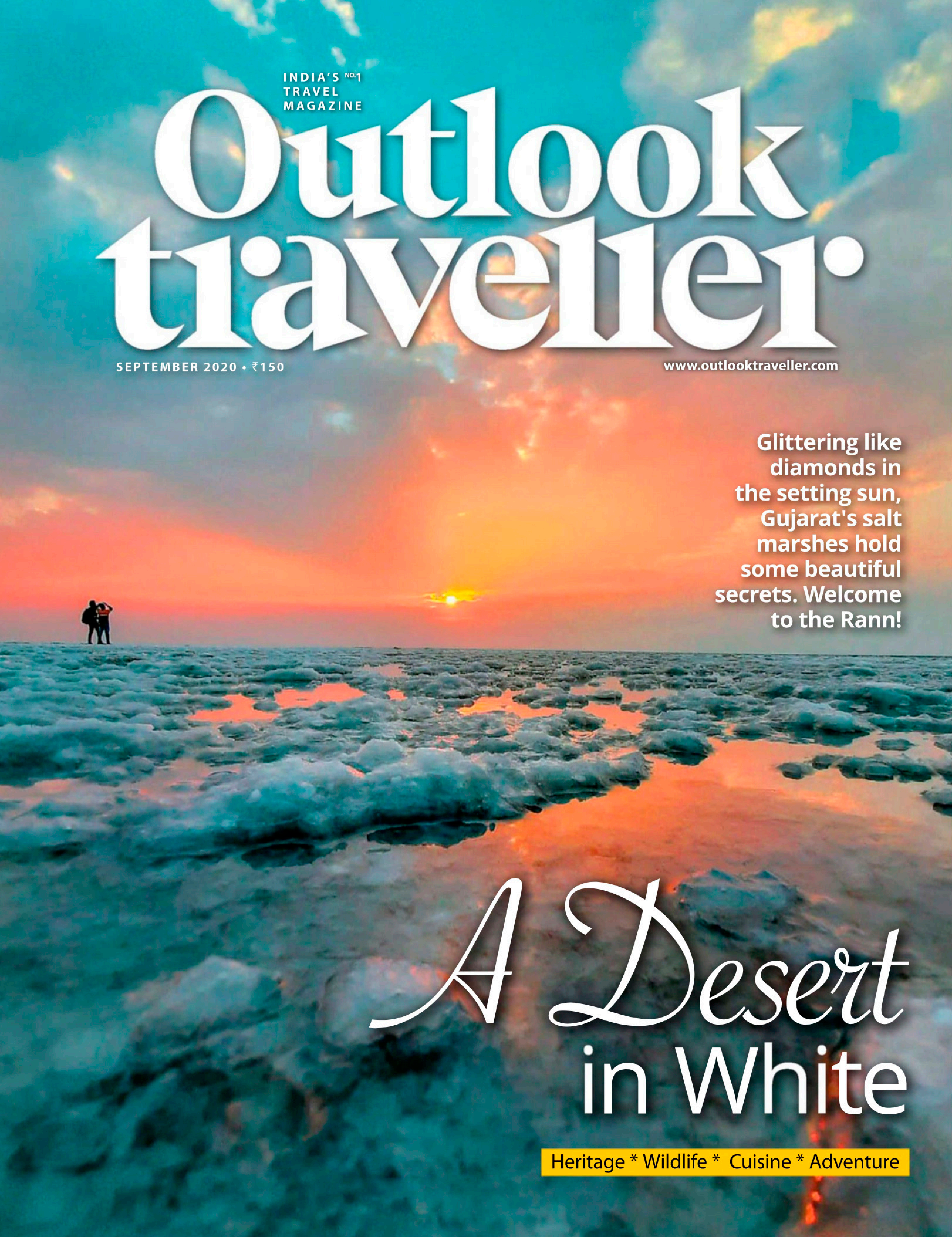

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